









A  
COMMENTARY  
UPON  
THE HOLY BIBLE,  
FROM  
HENRY AND SCOTT;  
WITH OCCASIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES FROM OTHER WRITERS  
MATTHEW TO ACTS.

LONDON:  
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,  
56, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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MDCCCXXXIV.

**LONDON:**  
**.PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,**  
**Duke-Street, Lambeth.**

# PREFATORY REMARKS ON THE NEW TESTAMENT,

PARTICULARLY UPON THE GOSPELS AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE NEW TESTAMENT consists of three parts: 1. The *Historical* books, or Gospels, with the Acts of the Apostles. 2. The *Doctrinal* books, or the Epistles written to different churches and individuals. 3. The *Prophetical*, or the Book of Revelation, which predicts events to come after the time when it was written.

The word translated "testament," in the original signifies "covenant." It is rendered testament in Matt. 26. 28, Heb. 9. 15, 17; but covenant in Heb. 8. 7, 9, and in other places. The general meaning of "covenant," is an agreement between two or more parties; but sometimes it signifies the absolute appointment of a person, respecting matters which are entirely at his own disposal, Gen. 9. 9, 11; Is. 54. 9, 10; Jer. 33. 20; Heb. 8. 8, 13. *Campbell* observes that "The two covenants are always, in scripture, the two dispensations or religious institutions; that under Moses, is the Old; that under the Messiah is the New. When mention is made in the epistles of the two covenants, Moses and Jesus are always contrasted; the Jewish economy and the Christian; Mount Sinai, in Arabia, whence the law was promulgated, and Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, where the gospel was first published. From signifying two religious dispensations, these terms came soon to denote the books wherein what related to these dispensations were contained." In 2 Cor. 3. 14, we have an example of this use of the appellation, "Old Testament." Thus, as *Bickersteth* remarks, "Dispensation, or the dealings of God with his creatures, seems more exactly to convey the meaning." But the title is now so appropriated by custom, that the strict meaning is not of material consequence, the nature of the book to which it refers being well understood.

With respect to the New Testament, *Fleming* says, "The first thing that occurs to us, is the most excellent part of the whole bible: the fourfold history of our blessed Saviour. O, let your thoughts dwell long, and strike deep here; for all the historical passages of the gospels, all the wise and sage parables to be found there, all the miracles wrought, all the prophecies mentioned, all the truths revealed, and all the counsels and exhortations there given—all these are as so many rich veins of what is more precious than the finest gold, and admirable and useful above all thought. The book of the Acts of the Apostles, gives us a noble and impartial account of the beginning and progress of the gospel, and the first settlement of the church; wherein we have a plain and clear view of christianity, in its pure and primitive dress; together with some most profitable examples and useful discourses. The apostolical epistles give us a full and copious account of the religion of the blessed Jesus, both in its principles and practice, its original and design; so that these are sufficient alone, if rightly understood, to enlighten our minds, to influence our affections and designs, and to regulate our lives and conversations. And the book of the Revelation, though dark and enigmatical, represents to us, in an august and lofty manner, the rectorship of our Lord Jesus in governing the world, overruling and disposing the designs and actions of men, and making all things at length work together for the illustration of his own glory and his people's good."

Having thus considered the general title and contents of this portion of the holy scriptures, the word *GOSPEL*, as applied to histories of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, next claims our attention. The original Greek word, in its general and proper acceptation, signifies, "good news," or "tidings," which exactly corresponds with our English word, gospel, being formed of the Saxon words, *Govil* or *good*, and *spel*, word or tiding. This term is confined in the New Testament, to the glad tidings of the actual coming of the Messiah; and assuredly there cannot be better news to sinful man, than to be told that Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinners; or, for lost man to learn that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. In this sense, our Lord himself says, Matt. 11. 5, that the poor have the gospel preached unto them. From the Greek word, *Euangelion*, thus translated, writers of the life of Christ are called Evangelists.

Besides this general sense, the term "gospel" is used in the New Testament with a variety of epithets, all of which express circumstances connected with this, which is indeed "good tidings of great joy to all people." The following texts are examples, and the words with which they are united plainly indicate the benefits the gospel confers, see Eph. 6. 15; Rom. 1. 1, 3; Rom. 1. 9; Eph. 1. 13; Matt. 4. 23; 9. 35; 24. 14; Mark 1. 14; Acts 15. 7; 2 Cor. 5. 19; 1 Tim. 1. 11; Acts 20. 24; 1 Cor. 9. 23; Mark 8. 35; 10. 29; 2 Tim. 1. 8; Philem. 13.

The gospels are four in number, written by four different persons, under the teaching and influence of God the Holy Spirit, at different periods. Particular information respecting each will be found prefixed to them respectively, and a few general remarks are all that will be necessary in this place. The variations in their different narratives, show that they did not write in concert; while by their general agreement, they confirm each other's testimony beyond dispute.

The internal evidence for the genuineness of the historical books of the New Testament has been stated as follows. What opinion would be formed respecting their origin, the date when they were written, and the persons by whom they were composed, by a person who might meet with these books, without any previous knowledge of them, after he had examined them carefully? 1. He would consider that the authors were Jews who spoke the Greek language. 2. That the writers laid no claim to be distinguished for human literature. 3. That they were written by persons contemporary with the circumstances narrated. 4. That there was much incidental agreement between the events narrated in these books, and the circumstances of the times, as related by common historians. 5. That the Acts of the Apostles contain many undesigned data connected with incidents mentioned in the epistles; and the latter exhibit many internal marks of the period to which they are ascribed. 6. The system of morality, developed in the gospels and epistles, is not the mechanical virtue of the Jews, nor the virtue of the Greek philosophers, nor the political and warlike virtues of the Romans. 7. The picture of the times here given, shows that the facts were recorded by eye-witnesses. Upon these grounds, the only admissible conclusion is, that the books of the New Testament are indisputably proved, even from internal evidence alone, to be genuine productions of the age and persons to which they are ascribed.

Lardner has shown there is nothing in the books of the New Testament inconsistent with the time and the authors to which they are attributed. But this is not all. He adduces express and positive evidence, that these books were written by the apostles of Jesus Christ, who was crucified at Jerusalem, in the reign of Tiberius, when Pilate was governor of Judea, and by their fellow-labourers. This is the concurring testimony of early and later ages, of writers in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and of men of different sentiments and opinions. These books were received from the beginning with the greatest respect, and have been publicly and solemnly read in the assemblies of Christians throughout the world, in every age, from that time to this. They were translated into divers languages; quoted in all arguments of a religious nature; appealed to in all controversies among Christians themselves. They were recommended as containing authentic accounts of Christian doctrine; and many commentaries have been written, to explain and illustrate them, from the first centuries of the Christian era. These, and other points which might be enumerated, afford full evidence of the genuineness and integrity of these books; and serious and impartial men, who fairly examine, and are willing to be determined by evidence, cannot but be convinced that these things are true, therefore that the Christian religion is from God, and to be universally embraced. Any one, thus studying the holy scriptures, especially the New Testament, will be convinced, with *Locke*, that, "in it are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter." *Bogue* says, of the New Testament, "Every thing necessary for us to know, is here revealed. There is nothing of value which men need to know, but is here taught. I will not say there

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is nothing we can desire ; but every thing necessary for the direction of our conduct, and the real comfort of our present state of being, is here revealed, with inimitable simplicity, purity, and precision.”—“The New Testament is as far above the best heathen writings, as the heavens are above the earth. The ideas are most excellent, most abundant, and expressed with clearness and simplicity. From the day when it was written to the present time, every age has found out something new. Nor is the mine exhausted. Wise and good men will, by persevering research, continue to present to the world their precious and ample treasures, as the reward of pious industry.”

It may truly be said, that there are no contradictions in the bible. When the scope and design of each writer is known, the reasons for any apparent differences, the variety of their expressions, their omissions, additions, and selections of events, will be understood and duly estimated. While some things might not be discrepant in the view of the age in which the sacred writers lived, though at first they appear so to us, many undesigned coincidences have been noticed, and more may be traced, which always must be considered among the strongest of testimonies.

A. Clarke says, “All the omissions of the ancient manuscripts put together would not countenance the *omission* of one essential doctrine of the gospel, relative to faith or morals : and all the *additions* countenanced by the whole mass of manuscripts already collated do not introduce a single point essential either to faith or manners, beyond what may be found in the most imperfect editions.”

With respect to the variations, as to *historical* narratives, it may be safely said, that not one exists which has not been minutely examined by learned men, opponents of the truth, as well as advocates for it, and scrutinized with a severity to which no human compositions have been subjected. The result is, that every apparent contradiction has been found to admit of explanation ; and that what at first appears a variation, often has been found to corroborate the apparently differing statements. No other ancient writings ever were found to contain such peculiar and forcible proofs of truth and genuineness as the holy scriptures.

Nor do the verbal and literal variations which are found to exist in the numerous written copies of the New Testament, in the least invalidate the authenticity of the sacred books, or expose us to doubts respecting the doctrines they contain. The discovery of these variations, in reality has produced a text, certainly more closely approaching to the original state of these writings, than if only a few copies, and consequently only a few differences, had been known to exist. It has been well remarked that the most imperfect manuscript of the New Testament (and the same may be said of the Old also) *omits* no doctrine, while the most corrupt *adds* none. The greatest discrepancies that any one can find, or imagine they find, leave untouched and unaltered the ground of faith and the rule of life. In this respect, all is perfect. The way of the Most High is made so plain, even in the poorest copies, that the wayfaring man, though a fool—though utterly destitute of deep learning, and critical abilities—need not err therein.

For information relative to these, and similar points, the reader must be referred to some of the numerous works written upon the subject, which may be had suitable for every class of reader. To those who are limited as to cost or time, Alexander’s “Evidences of Christianity,” Bogue’s “Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament,” and “The Companion to the Bible,” all published by the Religious Tract Society, may be recommended, while a variety of larger works, which it is impossible here to enumerate, invite others ; but one must be noticed, full of useful information, conveyed in the most comprehensive manner, and so complete as to be a library in itself. The work in question, many readers will anticipate, is *Horne’s Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*. Much valuable assistance has been derived from that compilation, in preparing many parts of the present work.

Respecting the literal *variations*, it is desirable to repeat, that they are not of much importance in any respect. They frequently consist of the mere omission of a letter, or a particle, or some unimportant change, originating with a copyist. If the different printed copies of the New Testament, in any language in which it has been often printed, were examined with equal minuteness, and every variation of spelling and typographical error noted, a vastly greater body of different readings

might be brought forward, and in some instances more serious ones; but still the same doctrinal truths would be found to exist unmutated. Here, however, it is necessary to caution the English reader against undue uneasiness on the subject of the book which he continually peruses, and looks upon with veneration. He may still continue to study the printed volume he has been accustomed to read, of whatever edition it may be, assured that, whatever date it bears, its contents are sufficient, by the Divine blessing, to make him wise unto salvation. But it may also be well to add, that of late years, considerable pains has been taken to ensure a greater degree of correctness in printing than formerly; the use of stereotype and standing type has assisted this; and the common English Bibles will now be found more free, even from errors in printing, than other books of the like extent.

Questions have arisen, how far the gospels are to be considered as supplemental to each other, or as independent narratives, and how far the latter writers had been acquainted with the gospels which preceded their own, or with other sources. Several hypotheses have been advanced, to account for the verbal similarities and occasional differences between the first three gospels, the arguments for which are clearly stated by *T. H. Horne*. Some of them are very objectionable, as well as untenable, being calculated to introduce lower views of the inspiration of scripture; as, for instance, that hypothesis which would consider all the first three gospels as drawn from one common and more ancient document. *Le Clerc* justly objects to a mere idea of this kind, which is detrimental to the value of the sacred writings; and says, "They seem to think *more* justly, who say that the first three evangelists were acquainted with each other's design." It is, however, very probable that those who wrote latest may have seen the gospels previously written.

By reference to the prefaces, the reader will observe the characteristics of each gospel. It is now generally concluded, that Matthew wrote the earliest, and that he does not always relate events in the order in which they occurred. Mark states minute circumstances omitted by Matthew, and seems to have arranged the facts in more regular order; but nearly all the circumstances mentioned by him are noticed also by Luke and Matthew. Luke has most of the character of an historian, as to completeness, minuteness, and regularity, in recording the order of events. John professedly wrote to supply additional matter; and by proving our Lord's Divinity, to refute heresies beginning to rise. As to chronological order, Luke is considered as best supplying the basis for a gospel harmony. This subject may be closed in the words of *Gleig*: "I admit of a common document; but that document was no other than *the preaching of our blessed Lord himself*. He was the great Prototype. In looking up to Him, the Author of their faith and mission, and to the very words in which he was wont to dictate to them—which not only yet sounded in their ears, but were also recalled by aid of his Holy Spirit, promised for that very purpose—they have given us three gospels, often agreeing in words, though not without much diversification, and always agreeing in sense."

The spiritual character of these writings, however, should most claim our attention. Many beautiful passages might here be adduced from various writers: but the following simple statement, from *Bickersteth*, will show what is the chief value of the writings of the four evangelists. "The great end of all the gospels, is to show us Jesus Christ, the salvation he has procured for us, and the example he has left us. He is God and man; *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. All the compassion that he manifested, and all the relief that he afforded to the bodies of men, is but a shadow of what he is ever ready to do for our souls. All the instructions that he gave on earth, show how willing he is now to guide his people into the way of truth. All the miracles show his power to help us in the worst distress. Believe in this Saviour. He will give you his Spirit, and you will be blessed in him, in time and through eternity. He has also left us *an example that we should follow his steps*. We should endeavour to be like-minded with Christ.

"The gospels also make known the great work of the Holy Spirit. The great and visible end and effects of the Holy Spirit's work, in bearing witness to the truth of what was said and done in that day by the apostles and primitive christians, was, in their circumstances, of great importance. That same Spirit creates our hearts anew, and puts us in possession of the spiritual blessing, which God has

promised in Christ Jesus. The gospel dispensation is peculiarly the ministration of the Spirit."

As to the Acts of the Apostles, it is only necessary here to observe, that its commencement shows the close connexion of the narrative with the gospel history.

To close in the words of *Doddridge*. "Let us especially praise the Lord for these sacred records, which contain such authentic and exact account of these important facts, in which we are all so nearly concerned; records incomparably more valuable than the writings of our private estates, or the charters of our public liberties. Let us earnestly pray that their great design may be answered in us; and make it our importunate request to Him, who is the Giver of all grace, that, through the operations of the Holy Spirit—without the influence of which, even scripture itself, with all our advantages for understanding and improving it, will be but a sealed book, or a dead letter—our faith may be nourished and confirmed by every portion of it we read; and that our hearts may be so delivered into the mould of his word, that, believing on Christ, under all the characters he bears, we may have life through his name; and at length receive the end of our faith, in the complete salvation of our souls through him; to whom with the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be undivided honours and lasting praises. Amen."

## TO THE READER.

IN the present work, it has been considered most advisable to give a separate commentary upon each gospel, by supplying some remarks upon every section, at the same time endeavouring to avoid mere repetitions as much as possible, while the references enable the reader to consult the whole of the commentary, upon any subject, in all the evangelists, where there are parallel passages.

1. An index, or tabular view is given, by which the whole may be read, or consulted as a harmony. In this arrangement, *Newcome* has been mostly followed, as generally approved, and as having stood the test of examination for a considerable time. The notes on some passages give the views of *Greswell*, and other harmonists, where it appeared desirable to do so. The reader will, however, recollect, that no harmony can ever claim to be considered as absolutely correct; although a well arranged system of this nature, is often beneficial in perusing the gospels.

2. The columns of figures at the head of each chapter, point out what portions of that chapter are parallel to portions in the other gospels, as relating to the same facts, parables, or discourses.

3. The figures prefixed to each section, § 1 to § 157, refer to the table which exhibits the whole of the four gospels brought into a harmony, or connected historical view, showing to what part of the sacred narrative each section belongs; while the table, by referring to the chapters constituting each section, enables the reader to examine any portion, or to go through the whole as a regular history.

4. The notes on this part of the New Testament, will be found more numerous than those in the Old Testament. In several instances, particularly in passages relative to the sufferings of our Lord, the notes of one evangelist will be found explanatory of parallel passages in the others. At the end of the volume are some general notes upon the following subjects, which it appeared preferable to arrange together, on account of their extent, and their connexion with different parts of the gospel.

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

MATTHEW, surnamed Levi, was a native of Galilee. Before his conversion he was a publican, or taxgatherer under the Romans at Capernaum, on the sea of Galilee. While employed at the receipt of custom, Jesus called him to be a witness of his words and works. From that time he continued to attend our Lord. After the resurrection he remained at Jerusalem with the other apostles, and received with them the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. We have not any authentic account of his life afterwards; but it is supposed that he went to Ethiopia, where some think he suffered martyrdom.

He is generally allowed to have written his gospel before any other of the evangelists, though the precise time when it was penned has been a subject of discussion, some placing it as early as A. D. 37, others as late as A. D. 63. The probability, however, seems to be in favour of the earlier date. Much difference of opinion also has arisen on the question whether Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew or in Greek. The weight of evidence appears to be that he wrote in both; and this may assist to reconcile the apparently differing testimonies of the fathers as to the date when the gospel was written, as the Hebrew gospel would be called for very soon after our Lord's ascension, for the use of the Jewish and Samaritan converts; while the Greek version might not have appeared till christianity was more widely diffused. The gospel, as we have it in Greek, contains evident proofs of being an original composition, and not a translation. It has not been uncommon even for uninspired writers to publish a work in more than one language. Josephus, a contemporary of Matthew, wrote his history of the Jewish wars both in Hebrew and Greek. The disappearance of the Hebrew gospel by St. Matthew is ascribed to its having been corrupted by the Ebionites, an early sect, who denied the Divinity of Christ, or lowered that fundamental doctrine of truth. And after the destruction of Jerusalem the Hebrew language, with every thing belonging to the Jewish nation, fell into contempt and neglect, which may also account for a Hebrew gospel not having been preserved. Many Hebrew manuscripts were then destroyed.

Of the genuineness and authenticity of the gospel according to St. Matthew there is most satisfactory evidence, and all the attempts which have been made to dispute some parts of it, have only tended more fully to prove that they are integral portions of the book. We have an unbroken series of testimony to this effect from the days of the apostles, both from christians, and others who were enemies to the christian faith.

The contents of this gospel, and the evidence of ancient writers, manifest that it was written primarily for the use of the Jewish nation. Every circumstance which might tend to satisfy them that Jesus was the Messiah is pointed out, and all unnecessary opposition to their prejudices is avoided; while the objections raised against Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees are related, with his decisive answers and refutations of their errors. The fulfilment of prophecy also was regarded by the Jews as strong evidence; this is especially dwelt upon by St. Matthew, who shows the descent of Jesus from Abraham by David, and his birth at Bethlehem, as had been foretold, with other circumstances of his history, as indicated by the prophets. He has particularly selected such parts of our Saviour's history and discourses as were best suited to awaken his own nation to a sense of their sins; to remove their erroneous expectations of an earthly kingdom, to abate their pride and self-conceit; to teach them the spiritual nature and extent of the gospel; and to prepare them for the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

It is unnecessary to attempt anticipating the important instruction with which this gospel is every where filled. It is enough to say that we here enter upon a part of scripture, the study of which must be attended with increasing satisfaction to every pious mind, as we see the shadows disperse, and the Sun of righteousness arising on a benighted world with salvation in his healing beams. As we thus proceed with increased certainty and confidence, our progress will be more and more pleasant, provided that, while we sit at Christ's feet to hear his gracious words, we lift up our hearts in constant prayer for his promised Spirit of truth and holiness, to dispel the darkness of our minds, and to lead us in the faith, experience, and practice of those doctrines and precepts, which here, by Divine authority, call for our attention.

## CHAPTER I.

§ 9. Ver. 1—17. *The genealogy of Jesus.*

Many great volumes of history have been written of states and kingdoms of the earth, and lives of famous men; the reading of them may please and inform the mind; but what are they all? how empty and comfortless compared with this history! This is the gospel, the only real

good tidings to all nations and all ages; still fresh, and equally good news from one generation to another. "The book of the generations of Jesus Christ." He was from the beginning in his Father's view, for the salvation of believers in all those preceding ages, as if he had already lived, and died, and rose again. A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,

for he sees through all successions of times, and all things in them are always alike present to him. But in the mean time, while the church was held in prefiguring shadows, this was its grand desire, that He might appear in the flesh. It was still looking and waiting when the day should break and the shadows flee away.—(88.)

Concerning this genealogy of our Saviour, observe, 1. The title. It is the book, or the account, as the Hebrew word sometimes signifies, of the generation of Jesus Christ, of his ancestors according to the flesh. As God, his outgoings were of old, from everlasting, Mic. 5. 2, and none can declare that generation; but, as Man, he was sent forth in the fulness of time, born of a woman, as here declared.

2. The principal intention. It is not an endless or needless genealogy. It is not a vainglorious one, as those of great men commonly are. The design is to prove that our Lord Jesus is the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, and therefore of the nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed; of the dominion, to David and his seed. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him, Gen. 12. 3; 22. 18, and to David that He should descend from him, 2. Sam. 7. 12; Ps. 89. 3, &c.; 132. 11; and, therefore, unless Jesus is a Son of David, and a Son of Abraham, he is not the Messiah. Now this is here proved from authentic records. The Jews were very exact in preserving their pedigrees; and there was a providence in it for the clearing up of the descent of the Messiah from the fathers. Since his coming, that nation is so dispersed and confounded, that it is a question whether any person in the world can prove himself to be a son of Abraham, while it is certain that none can prove himself to be either a son of Aaron, or a son of David; so that the priestly and kingly office must either be given up, as lost for ever, or be in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Christ is here first called the Son of David, because, under that title, he was commonly spoken of, and expected, among the Jews. Those who owned him to be the Christ, called him the Son of David.

In calling Christ the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, it is shown that God is faithful to his promise, and will

make good every word he has spoken, though the performance be long deferred. Delays of promised mercies, though they exercise our patience, do not weaken God's promise. This Son of David, and Son of Abraham, who was to be the Glory of his Father's house, was born when the seed of Abraham was a despised people, become tributary to the Roman, and when the house of David was buried in obscurity; for Christ was to be a Root out of a dry ground, Isaiah 53. 2. God's time for the performance of his promise, is, when it labours under the greatest improbabilities. Nor can we have any pretence for doubting the rest, as the great promise of the incarnation of his beloved Son, to be our Surety and atoning Sacrifice, has been so exactly fulfilled.

3. The particular series of it, drawn in a direct line from Abraham, according to the genealogies in the books of Chronicles, as far as those go, which we here see the use of. It is evidently the genealogy of Joseph, not of Mary: see Luke 3. Joseph was supposed by the Jews to be the father of Jesus, and he was his father-in-law, therefore it was proper that Joseph's descent from David should be ascertained.

Some particulars we may observe in this genealogy. Among the ancestors of Christ who had brethren, he generally descended from a younger brother; showing that the preeminence of Christ came not as that of earthly princes, but from the will of God.

We observe among these ancestors of Christ some that were heathens, and others, that on different accounts were infamous characters. Perhaps it was designed that we should reflect that persons of all nations, and even the chief of sinners, are encouraged to trust in Christ as their Saviour. To Him then let us look, even from the ends of the earth, yea, from the depths of guilt and distress, and the consequence will be happy beyond all expression.—(89.)

When the Son of God was pleased to assume our nature, he came as near to us, in all the circumstances of our fallen, wretched condition, as consisted with his being perfectly free from sin; and while we read such names in his genealogy, we should not forget how low the Lord of glory stooped to save the vilest of the human race. How absurd, then, for men to reproach others with their ancestors, or to glory in their own!

Though divers kings are here named, yet none is expressly called a king, but David, "the king;" because with him the covenant of royalty was made, and to him the promise of the kingdom of the Messiah was given, who is said to inherit the throne of his father David, Luke 1. 32. What a mixture there was of good and bad, in the succession of these kings! Grace does not run in the blood, nor does reigning sin.

The captivity in Babylon is mentioned as a remarkable period in this line. It was a wonder that the Jews were not lost in their captivity, as other nations have been; but this intimates the reason, because from them, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, even that Blessing of blessings, Christ himself, Isa. 65. 8, 9. It was with reference to him that they were restored, and the desolations of the sanctuary were looked upon with favour for the Lord's sake, Dan. 9. 17.

All these lines meet in Jesus, who is called Christ. This is He that was so importunately desired, so impatiently expected, and to whom the patriarchs had regard when they were so desirous of children, that they might have the honour of coming into the sacred line. Blessed be God we are not now in a dark and cloudy state of expectation, but see clearly what these prophets and kings saw as through a glass darkly. And we may have a greater honour than that of which they were ambitious: for those who do the will of God, are in a more honourable relation to Christ than those akin to him according to the flesh, ch. 12. 50. Jesus is called Christ, that is, the Anointed, the same with the Hebrew name Messiah. He is called Messiah the Prince, Dan. 9. 25, and often God's Anointed, Ps. 2. 2. Under this character he was expected; Art thou the Christ—the Anointed one? David, the king, was anointed, 1 Sam. 16. 13; so was Aaron, the priest, Lev. 8. 12, and Elisha, the prophet, 1 Kings 19. 16, and Isaiah, the prophet, Isa. 61. 1. Christ being appointed to, and qualified for all these offices, is therefore called the Anointed—anoined with the oil of gladness above his fellows; and from this name, which is as ointment poured forth, all his followers are called Christians, for they also have received the anointing.

The general summary of all this genealogy we have, ver. 17, where it is sum-

med up in three remarkable periods. In the first, we have the family of David rising, and looking forth as the morning; in the second, we have it flourishing in its meridian lustre; in the third, we have it declining and dwindled into the family of a poor carpenter: then Christ shines forth out of it, the Glory of his people Israel.

So important is the character of the Saviour in every view; such a Divine splendour is cast around it, so profound are the mysteries with which it is connected, that our minds should be filled with awful reverence when we draw near to contemplate. But the difficulty of the task should not discourage humble, though weak endeavours. Only let us earnestly entreat that we may not darken counsel by words without knowledge. In the study of every part of the scriptures, there is continual need of prayer, that we may possess a spiritual and just discernment. But here especially, where the Lord himself comes down from heaven and passes by before us, we should beg that the veil may be removed from our minds, and that He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.—(60.)

1. Jesus means "Saviour," see ver. 21, and is the same with Joshua in the O. T. Christ means "the Anointed," indicating his priestly, royal, and prophetic offices. It was applicable to the dignity of king and priest, and the name the Hebrews applied to their long expected Messiah. The words, Jesus Christ, are often joined in the N. T. not merely that the meaning of Saviour might be joined to the title Christ, but that Jesus may be pointed out as the true Messiah or Christ, to oppose the perverseness of the Jews. *Grotius* remarks that the name Jesus was soon laid aside, and that of Christ, which had never before been used as the proper name of a person, was substituted for it, so that among the heathen our Lord was more known by the latter name than the former. See *Palpy*. This name was the distinguishing title of conquerors, or successful leaders among the Jews, *Obad*. 21. It is here applied in a spiritual sense.—*Elzey*.

For further remarks on the genealogies of Christ, see the note on Luke 3.

16. Or "who is accounted, and is Christ."—*Bloomfield*.

§ 7. Ver. 18—25. An angel appears to Joseph.

Let us look to the circumstances under which the Son of God entered into this lower world, till we learn to despise all the distinctions of rank, birth, and riches, when compared with the real dignity which piety and holiness confer. He could have assumed our nature in an imperial palace,



as well as in an obscure cottage or a humble stable. But his dignity and honour, like his kingdom, were not of this world. A poor obscure virgin, espoused to a carpenter, was chosen to be the honoured mother of Him, by whom kings reign, and before whom they must all appear in judgment.

The mystery of Christ's incarnation is to be adored, not curiously inquired into. Some circumstances attending the birth of Christ we find here, which are not in Luke, though it is more largely recorded there. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was espoused to Joseph; not completely married, but a purpose of marriage solemnly declared in words, and a promise of it made, if God permitted. Thus respect was put upon the married state, she was sheltered from injurious suspicions, and had one to be the guide of her youth, the companion of her solitude and travels, a partner in her cares, and a help meet for her. It was so ordered that Christ should partake of our nature, yet that he should be pure from the defilement of original sin, which has been communicated to all the posterity of Adam.

Never was any daughter of Eve so dignified as the virgin Mary was, and yet in danger of falling under the imputation of one of the worst of crimes. But being conscious of her own innocence, she kept her mind calm and easy, and committed her cause to Him that judges righteously. Those who keep a good conscience, may cheerfully trust God with the keeping of their good names, and have reason to hope that he will clear up their integrity and their honour, as the sun at noon-day.

We may well imagine what great trouble and disappointment it was to Joseph, to find one he had a value for, come under the suspicion of a heinous crime. Were there deliberation in our censures and judgments, as in his, there would be more mercy and moderation in them. Being a just man, a strict observer of the law, he would not proceed to marry her, but resolved to put her away; and yet, in tenderness for her, determined to do it as privately as possible.

While he thought on these things, and knew not what to determine, God graciously directed him what to do, and made him easy. Those who would have direction from God, must think on things themselves, and consult with themselves. It is the thoughtful, not the unthinking,

whom God will guide. God's time to come in with instruction to his people, is when they are at a loss. God's comforts most delight the soul, in the multitude of its perplexed thoughts.

The message was sent to Joseph by an angel of the Lord. Now the intercourse with heaven, by angels, with which the patriarchs had been dignified, but which had been long disused, began to be revived; for when the First-Begotten is to be brought into the world, the angels were ordered to attend him. This angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, when he was asleep, as God sometimes spake unto the fathers. When we are most quiet and composed, we are in the best frame to receive the notices of the Divine will. The Spirit moves on the calm waters. This dream, no doubt, carried its own evidence along with it, that it was of God, and not the production of a vain fancy.

Joseph is directed to proceed in his intended marriage. From whatever cause his fears arose, they were all silenced. It is a great mercy to be delivered from our fears, and to have doubts resolved, so as to proceed in our affairs with satisfaction.

He is told, that the Holy Spirit, who produced the world, now produced the Saviour of the world, and prepared him a body, as was promised him, when he said Lo, I come, see Heb. 10. 7. He is the Son of God, and yet partakes of the substance of his mother. His name in this, as in other things, is, Wonderful. We do not read that the virgin Mary herself proclaimed the honour done her; God sent an angel to attest it. Those who seek not their own glory, shall have honour that comes from God; it is reserved for the humble.

He is told that she should bring forth the Saviour of the world. What he shall be, is intimated in the name that should be given to her Son; Thou shalt call his name Jesus, a Saviour. Jesus is the same name with Joshua. And also in the reason of that name, For he shall save his people from their sins; not the nation of the Jews only, but all who were given him by the Father's choice, and all who have given themselves to him by their own. Those whom Christ saves, he saves from their sins; from the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, from the dominion of sin by the Spirit of his grace. In saving them from sin, he saves them from wrath and the curse, and all misery, here and hereafter. Christ came to save his

people, not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; to purchase for them, not a liberty to sin, but a liberty from sins, to redeem them from all iniquity, Tit. 2. 14; and so to redeem them from among men, to himself, who is separate from sinners.

St. Matthew, writing among the Jews, more frequently observes the fulfilling of the scripture, than any other of the evangelists. Here we read that the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in our Lord Jesus; by which it appears, that this was "He that should come," and we are to look for no other; for this was "He to whom all the prophets bare witness." The scripture fulfilled in the birth of Christ, was the promise of a sign to king Ahaz, Isa. 7. 14, where the prophet, encouraging the people of God to hope for deliverance from Sennacherib, directs them to look forward to the Messiah, who was to come of the people of the Jews, and the house of David. Thence it was easy to infer, that though that people and that house were afflicted, yet neither could be abandoned to ruin, so long as God had such honour, such blessing, in reserve for them. The deliverances God wrought for the Old Testament church, were types and figures of the great salvation by Christ; and if God will do the greater, he will not fail to do the lesser.

The truth proved by this sign is, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Mediator between God and man; for they shall call his name Immanuel; that is, he shall be Immanuel; as when it is said, He shall be called, it is meant, he shall be the Lord our Righteousness. Immanuel signifies "God with us;" a mysterious name, but very precious; God incarnate among us, and so God reconcilable to us, at peace with us, and taking us into covenant and communion with himself. Behold, in this, the deepest mystery, and the richest mercy. By the light of nature, we see God as a God above us; by the light of the law, we see him as a God against us; but by the light of the gospel, we see him as Immanuel, God with us, in our own nature, and interested for us. Herein the Redeemer commended his love.

There was as exact a conformity between this and other passages quoted, and the events, as there could have been if the former had been effected merely for the accomplishment of the latter. God does not bring about an event because some prophet had foretold it, but the prophet

was inspired to foretell it because God had previously decreed the event.—(77.)

Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, speedily, without delay, and cheerfully, without dispute. Extraordinary direction like this we are not now to expect; but God still has ways of making known his mind in doubtful cases, by hints of providence, debates of conscience, and advice of faithful friends; by each of these, applying the general rules of the written word, we should, in all the steps of our life, particularly the great turns of it, take direction from God, and we shall find it safe and comfortable to do as he bids us.

Here is the accomplishment of the Divine promise. Let us again refer to his name. We have no evidence that they are people of Christ who are not saved from the dominion of their sins, and are seeking continually for deliverance from the remaining power of them. Every time that we name the name of Jesus, we should be reminded to rely on and to apply to him for this complete salvation; that we may be delivered from guilt and sin, and saved in Him, the Lord our righteousness, with an everlasting salvation. Then may we rejoice that God is with us, as our reconciled Friend and Portion in every place, and in all the circumstances of life. **JESUS EMMANUEL** will be our strength and song, in all tribulations, and in the hour of death. We shall daily experience the fulfilling of the scriptures, and proceed in unreserved obedience to the will of God, as it is made known to us, while all our perplexities and troubles will soon issue in glory, honour, and everlasting happiness.

19. The punishment of death by stoning was ordained by the Jewish law in such a case. Joseph, from motives of humanity, intended to give up the betrothment. This might be done by giving Mary a bill of divorcement before some friends and rabbins, without specifying any reasons.—*Willan*.

20. The most important quotations from the O. T. that occur in the gospels, are introduced as perfect accomplishments of ancient prophecies in the person of Christ.—We have prophecies that literally and singly apply to Christ. Also many that are finally completed in Him, in a higher and more spiritual manner than in that to which they at first allude. *Owen* says, that the application of the prophecies by the evangelists to Christ, must be just, for if the same Spirit that dictated the prophecies in the O. T. dictated their interpretation in the N. T., surely he could best ascertain to whom they were applicable.—*From Eiseley*.

25. On what terms Joseph and Mary afterwards lived is of so little importance to us, that it is a wonder it should ever have been the subject of debate.—*Doddridge*.

## CHAPTER II.

13. Ver. 1-8. *The wise men's inquiry after Christ.*

Those who live at the greatest distance from the means of grace, often use most diligence, and become most acquainted with Christ and his salvation. But no curious arts or mere human learning can direct men unto him. This must be learned by attending to the word of God, as a light that shineth in a dark place, and by seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Herod was an Edomite, made king of Judea by the rulers of the Roman state. Christ was born in his reign, and notice is taken of this to show that the sceptre was now departed from Judah; therefore now was the time for Shiloh to come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be; witness these wise men. Gen. 49. 10.

These wise men are here called magi. The Jews regarded not Christ, but these Gentiles sought him out. They, in their country, which was in the east, had seen an extraordinary star, or a meteor rather, in the lower regions of the air, such as they had not seen before; which they took to be an indication of an extraordinary person, born in the land of Judea. The birth of Christ was notified to the Jewish shepherds by an angel, to the Gentile philosophers by a star. God spake to each in the way they were best acquainted with. Perhaps this star put them in mind of Balaam's prophecy, that a star should come out of Jacob, pointing at a sceptre that should rise out of Israel: see Numb. 24. 17. Balaam came from the mountains of the east, and was one of their wise men. Others impute their inquiry to the general expectation entertained at that time, in those eastern parts, of some great prince to appear.

They came from the east to Jerusalem, in further quest of that prince. This was an early intimation of the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, even when the Jews would neglect and be rejected of him, and it was a call to the nation to consider Jesus as their long-expected Messiah.

They do not ask, whether there was such a one born; but, Where is he born? They call Christ the King of the Jews, for so the Messiah was expected to be; and he is Protector and Ruler of all the spiritual Israel; he is born a King.

To this question they fully expected to have a ready answer; but there is more

gross ignorance in the world, and in the church too, than we are aware of. Many that we think should direct us to Christ, are themselves strangers to him. Are the wise men asked, What business have ye with him? what have the men of the east to do with the king of the Jews? they have their answer ready; We are come to worship him. They conclude he will be their King, and therefore they will betimes worship him. Those in whose hearts the day-star is risen, to give them any thing of the knowledge of Christ, make it their business to worship him.

Though Herod was very old, and never had shown affection for his family, and was not himself likely to live till a new-born infant had grown up to manhood, he began to be troubled with the dread of a rival. He understood not the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. The citizens of Jerusalem also, not having right views of the blessings to be expected from the Messiah, seem to have been troubled, expecting new scenes of bloodshed from another competitor for the throne.

The Jews also believed that the glorious reign of the Messiah should commence with a series of calamitous events. Several of their traditions exist; all which unite to prove that many causes may have combined to cause this agitation.—(62.)

Herod showed a strange mixture of regard to the word of God, and contempt for it. He supposed the ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled, yet formed a plan to defeat them, which would do away all the purposes of God from the beginning! Carnal, wicked hearts dread nothing so much as the fulfilling of the scripture. He assembled the chief priests, and all the scribes, and demanded what was the place, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, where Christ should be born. All agree the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, here called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the land of Zebulun, referring to a prophecy, Micah 5. 2. Here, as elsewhere, the sense, rather than the exact words, of the Old Testament prophecies is sometimes quoted in the New.

Herod next conferred with the wise men to know the time when the star appeared, from which he might learn the age of his infant rival. He covered it with a show of religion, That I may come and worship him also. The greatest

wickedness often conceals itself under a mask of piety. See how he was infatuated. He might have sent spies to watch the wise men, and to destroy the child. God can hide from the enemies those methods by which they might easily destroy the church. Neither piety, curiosity, nor any other motive, induced any of the Jews to accompany the wise men. This showed their dread of Herod's indignation, as well as their disregard to their spiritual concerns.

Let us beware of a dead faith. A man may be persuaded of many truths, and yet may hate them, because they interfere with his ambition, or sinful indulgences. Such a belief will make him uneasy, and the more resolved to oppose the truth and the cause of God; and he may be foolish enough to hope for success in attempting to oppose the designs of the Lord.

1. The word translated "wise men," in the original is "magi." They were originally a peculiar class of philosophers of Persia, who devoted themselves to study, particularly of medicine and astronomy. Some suppose these came from Arabia.

2. The only probable opinion respecting this star is, that it was a luminous meteor, and was called a star from its resemblance to one of those heavenly bodies. It was formed, and its motion regulated preternaturally, to direct these eastern magi to the Saviour. They were taught the design of its appearance by Divine revelation, probably connected with ancient prophecies. The expectation of a Prince to be born in Judea, who should rule the world, had been taught by the Jews during the captivity. *Townsend* observes, whether that which guided them was a comet, a meteor, or a star, the wisdom and harmony of the dispensation of God is equally manifest.

6. "Rule." The word here used means "feed," and is derived from the conduct of a shepherd to his flock. It is used in the sense of govern, by ancient Greek writers, but is especially applicable to the nature of Christ's care for his people as the good Shepherd: see John 10, &c.

*Tacitus* says, "A persuasion existed in the minds of many, that some ancient writings of the priests contained a prediction, that about that time an eastern power would prevail, and that persons proceeding from Judea would obtain dominion." *Suetonius* also, in the life of *Vespasian*, speaks of it.

§ 13. Ver. 9-12. *The wise men worship Jesus.*

The wise men found out Christ by the same star or meteor they had seen in their own country. How graciously God directed them! By the first appearance of the star, they were given to understand where they might inquire for this King; then it disappeared, and they were left to take the usual methods for such an inquiry. Extraordinary helps are not to be expected where ordinary means are to be had. They traced the matter as far as

they could; they were upon their journey to Bethlehem, but how shall they find him when they come thither? Here they were at a loss, when, behold, the star which they saw in the east went before them. If we go on as far as we can in the way of our duty, God will direct and enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do. Now they saw they were not deceived, and had not taken this long journey in vain. God was with them, and the tokens of his presence and favour cannot but fill the souls of those who know how to value them, with joy unspeakable. What joy these wise men felt upon this sight of the star, none know so well as those who, after a long and melancholy night of temptation and desertion, under the power of a spirit of bondage, at length receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God.

We may well imagine what a disappointment it was to them, when they found a cottage was his palace, and his own poor mother all the retinue he had! Is this the Saviour of the world? Is this the King of the Jews, nay, and the Prince of the kings of the earth? Yes, this is He, who, though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, became thus poor. However, these wise men did not think themselves baffled in their inquiry; but, as having found the King they sought, they presented themselves first, and then their gifts to him. Every indication of obtaining an interest in Christ, will give sincere joy to the humble inquirer, who will not be stumbled at finding him and his disciples in obscure cottages, after having in vain sought them in palaces and populous cities.

They fell down and worshipped him. To this babe they gave honour, not only as to a King, but as to a God. All that have truly found Christ, fall down before him; they adore him, and submit themselves to him. It will be the wisdom of the wisest of men, and by this it will appear that they know Christ, if they are the humble, faithful worshippers of the Lord Jesus.

Is a soul busy, seeking after Christ? Would it worship him, and does it say, Alas, I am a foolish and poor creature, and have nothing to offer? Nothing! Hast thou not a heart, though unworthy of him, dark, hard, and foul? Give it to him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him. Give

it really and freely to him; he will take it, and will make it better, he will purify it, and thou shalt never repent having giving it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and will give thee himself, and be thine for ever.—(88.)

In the eastern nations, when they did homage to their kings, they made presents. Thus the subjection of the kings of Sheba to Christ is spoken of, Ps. 72. 10, They shall bring presents, and offer gifts: see Isa. 60. 6. If we are sincere in the surrender of ourselves to Christ, we shall be willing to part with whatever is dearest to us and most valuable; to him, and for him: nor are our gifts accepted, unless we first present ourselves to him, as living sacrifices. God had respect to Abel, and then to his offering. The gifts the wise men presented were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Providence sent this for a seasonable relief to Joseph and Mary in their present poor condition.

Thus our Father, who knows what his children need, uses some as stewards to supply the wants of others, and can provide for them, even from the ends of the earth. Above all, let us remember, that if we do not come to Christ, honour and worship him as our Lord and Saviour, now he is on his throne of glory, these eastern sages, who sought him while an infant in his mother's arms, will rise up in judgment against us.

God prevented the mischief Herod designed to the child Jesus, and the trouble it would have been to the wise men to have been accessory to it. They were warned of God not to return to Herod, nor to Jerusalem. They departed into their own country another way, to bring the tidings to their countrymen, which would be a further preparation for preaching the gospel in those regions.

11. Some of the fathers, and other writers, think that there was a mystical meaning in these presents, and consider that the gold signified tribute to Jesus as a King; frankincense was honouring him as God, the burning of incense being generally used in Divine worship; and that myrrh signified his human or mortal nature, as it was used in embalming dead bodies, or that it pointed out his bitter sufferings. This may be considered as fanciful rather than solid. But that they approached him as a royal child, is evident from the gifts, and there is no doubt they regarded him as a supernatural being

§ 13. Ver. 13-15. *Jesus carried into Egypt.*

Joseph knew neither the danger the child was in, nor how to escape it; but God, by an angel, tells him of both, as be-

fore he directed him in like manner what to do. Take the young Child, and flee into Egypt. He that came to die for us, when his hour was not yet come, fled for his own safety. Egypt was infamous for idolatry, tyranny, and enmity to the people of God: it had been a house of bondage to Israel, and particularly cruel to the infants of Israel; yet it is appointed to be a place of refuge to the holy Child Jesus! God, when he pleases, can make the worst of places serve the best of purposes. This may be considered as a trial of the faith of Joseph and Mary. But their faith, being tried, was found firm, and they believe this is the Son of God, though they see no miracle wrought for his preservation, but they are put to the use of ordinary means. And now it appeared how well God had provided for the young Child and his mother, in appointing Joseph to stand in so near a relation to them; now the gold which the wise men brought would bear their charges. God intimates the continuance of his care and guidance. Thus God will keep his people still in dependence upon him. If we and our infants are at any time in straits, let us remember the straits which Christ in his infancy was brought into.

Joseph immediately arose, and went away by night, the same night, as it should seem, that he received the orders. Any abundance incumbers a necessary flight. If rich people have the advantage of the poor while they possess what they have, the poor have the advantage of the rich when called to part with it. In this exile they remained till the death of Herod. Hosea 11. 1, undoubtedly referred to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; but it is here applied, by way of analogy, to Christ, the Head of the church. It is no new thing for God's sons to be in Egypt, in a strange land, in a house of bondage; but they shall be brought out. They may be hid in Egypt, but they shall not be left there. All the elect of God, being by nature children of wrath, are born in a spiritual Egypt, and in conversion are effectually called out.

15. *Lightfoot* shows, from the Jewish writers, that at this time the Jews in Egypt were so numerous, that if a poor countryman of theirs came to that land, he might easily obtain employment and subsistence.

§ 13. Ver. 16-18. *Herod causes the infants of Bethlehem to be massacred.*

The jealousy and disappointment of

Herod worked him up into a rage, and he determined to make sure of the destruction of his fancied rival. He killed all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the villages of that city. Unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often transports men to the most absurd cruelties. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it begins. That sin which entered by one man's disobedience, introduced death with it; and God's judgments are a great deep. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But this murder of the infants was their martyrdom. How early did persecution commence against Christ and his kingdom! If these infants were thus baptized with blood, though it were their own, into the church triumphant, it could not be said but that they were abundantly recompensed in heaven for what they lost on earth. Thus the date of Christ's birth was publicly marked, and all others who could have pretended to be the Messiah, as having been born at Bethlehem about the same time, were cut off. Herod now thought he had baffled the Old Testament prophecies, had defeated the indications of the star, and the devotions of the wise men; but whatever crafty, cruel devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand. This event formed another accomplishment of the words of the prophet Jeremiah, ch. 31. 15—17.

A great number of events under the old testament dispensation shadowed forth certain facts or truths under the new testament, the connexion between which can only be discovered by the attentive and devout reader of the bible.—(14.)

Imagination can hardly conceive, still less can the pen describe, the horrors of such a scene; but the history of Herod, his cruel deeds, and still more cruel purposes, show there was nothing too vile for this wretched man to perpetrate. It is impossible to assign limits to the wickedness of which the human heart is capable.

The quoting of this prophecy might obviate an objection some would make against Christ, upon this sad providence. Can the Messiah, who is to be the consolation of Israel, be introduced with all this lamentation? Yes, for so it was foretold. And besides, if we look further, we shall find that the bitter weeping in Ramah was but a prologue to the greatest joy, for it ful-

lows; Thy work shall be rewarded, and there is hope in thy end. Unto them a Child was born, sufficient to repair all their losses.

16. "From those entering the second year, down to the time whereof he had procured exact information from the magians."—*Campbell*. He concludes that the order was to kill those from six to twelve months old. From a full year and under.—*Holden*. The silence of Josephus is not a valid objection, as he omits many material facts in Jewish history, and had particular reasons for not noticing this. It agrees with the well-known cruelty of Herod. It is confirmed by the Pagan historian Macrobius, and by the philosopher Celsus, the bitter enemy of christianity. The children of a small Jewish town could not be many.

17. The Evangelist does not say, This was done that it might be fulfilled; but, Then was fulfilled, then that happened which gave a more full completion to the words of Jeremiah, and thus gave greater occasion for Rachel to weep than before.—*Carpenter*.

§ 13. Ver. 19—23. *Death of Herod—Jesus brought to Nazareth.*

In a few months after Herod had caused the infants to be massacred, his life and cruelties were ended by a most painful and loathsome disease. An angel was then sent to admonish Joseph to go back with the young Child and his mother into the land of Israel.

Egypt may serve to sojourn in, or take shelter in, for a while, but not to abide in. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to them he must return.

God had sent Joseph into Egypt; and there he stayed till the same God that brought him thither ordered him thence. God's people follow his direction, whithersoever he leads them, wherever he lodges them. Did we but look upon the world as our Egypt, the place of our bondage and banishment, and heaven only as our Canaan, our home, our rest, we should as readily arise, and depart thither, when we are called for, as Joseph did out of Egypt.

He had further directions from God, where to fix in the land of Israel. These orders Joseph received in a dream, probably, as before, by the ministration of an angel. God could have signified his will to Joseph by the Child Jesus, but we do not find that in those removes he took notice of any thing that occurred: surely it was because in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren. Being a Child, he spake as a child, and did as a child, and drew a veil over his infinite knowledge and power; as a child he increased in wisdom.

What a succession of enemies there is against Christ and his church! For this reason Joseph must not take the young Child into Judea. God will not thrust his children into danger, but when it is for his own glory and their trial; for precious in the sight of the Lord are the life and the death of his saints.

The family must settle in Galilee. There Philip now ruled, who was a mild, quiet man. Thither they were sent, there they were well known, and were among their relations. There they continued, and from thence our Saviour was called Jesus of Nazareth, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, for, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? In this is fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

We do not read any such direct prophecy in the Old Testament; it is rather referred to as the general sense of the prophets than as an express declaration. Some think it means that Jesus would be the true Nazarene or Nazarene, separated and consecrated to God in a special manner. Others understand it of the contempt and indignity the Messiah was to suffer. Nazareth was a place held in bad estimation, and Christ was crucified with this accusation, Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews. Wherever Providence allots the bounds of our habitation, we must expect to share the reproach of Christ; yet if this be because we are consecrated to God through him, and copy his example of truth and righteousness, we may glory in the distinction, assured that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified.

19. See the general note on the dates of principal events in the life of Christ, with reference to the circumstances related in this chapter.

23. The appellation of Nazarene involved ridicule and reproach. The Galileans were despised by the other Israelites, but the Nazarenes were subjects of contempt to their own countrymen. A Nazarene was a term of contempt, proverbially given to any worthless or despicable person.

No ancient manuscript has ever been found in which the two first chapters of this gospel are wanting, or any part of them, unless the manuscript itself is imperfect.

### CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1-12. M. 1. 1-8. L. 3. 1-17.

Ver. 13. 17. M. 1. 9-11. L. 3. 21-22.

§ 15. Ver. 1-6. *John the Baptist—His preaching, manner of life, and baptism.*

We have here an account of the preaching and baptism of John, which were the

dawning of the gospel day. The time when he appeared was, in those days, ver. 1, or after those days; long after what was recorded in the foregoing chapter, in the time appointed of the Father for the beginning of the gospel, when the fulness of time was come, which was often thus spoken of in the Old Testament. Christ's appearances are all in their season. Glorious things were spoken both of John and Jesus, at and before their births, yet though we might have expected to hear many things respecting them, as the one was wholly without sin, and the other filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, nothing is recorded of their childhood. Our faith must principally look to Christ in his office and undertaking, for therein is the display of his power.

After Malachi there was no prophet until John the Baptist came, to whom Malachi points more directly than any of the Old Testament prophets had done. He appeared first in the wilderness of Judea. This was not an uninhabited desert, but a part of the country not thickly peopled, nor much enclosed; it had six cities and their villages, which are named, Josh. 15. 61, 62. In these John preached, there he had hitherto lived, being born near, in Hebron. The word of the Lord found John here in a wilderness. No place is so remote as to shut us out from the visits of Divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse the saints have with Heaven, is, when they are withdrawn furthest from the noise of this world.

He came preaching. The doctrine he preached was that of repentance; Repent ye. The word here used, implies a total revolution in the mind, a change in the judgment, disposition, and affections, another and a better bias of the soul. John Baptist's business was to call men to repent of their sins. Consider your ways, change your minds; you have thought amiss; think again, and think aright. True penitents have other thoughts of God and Christ, sin and holiness, of this world and the other, than they had. The change of the mind produces a change of the way. Those who are truly sorry for what they have done amiss, will be careful to do so no more. This repentance is necessary duty, in obedience to the command of God, Acts 17. 30, and necessary for the comforts of the gospel of Christ. If the heart of man had continued upright and unstained, Divine consolations

might have been received without this; but, being sinful, the sore must be searched, or it cannot be cured.

The argument used to enforce this call, was, For the kingdom of heaven is at hand; that is, the gospel dispensation of the covenant of grace, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a kingdom of which Christ is the sovereign; and we must be the willing, loyal, subjects of it. It is not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom. The privileges of this kingdom are all of a heavenly nature. John preached this as at hand; to us it is come, by the pouring out of the Spirit, and the full exhibition of the riches of gospel grace. Now this is a great inducement to us to repent. There is nothing like the consideration of Divine grace to break the heart, both *for* sin and *from* sin. That is evangelical repentance, which flows from a sight of Christ, from a sense of his love, and from hopes of pardon and forgiveness through him. Kindness is conquering; abused kindness is humbling and melting. What a wretch was I to sin against such grace, against the law and love of such a kingdom! It is a great encouragement to us to repent; repent, for your sins shall be pardoned upon your repentance. Return to God in a way of duty; and he will, through Christ, return unto you in the way of mercy.

This is the main purport and end of God's messages to man in all times, by all that he hath sent; and still all his ministers under the gospel call men to repentance, to bring them home to God. Men are naturally turned from God. He is calling to them, Return, why will ye die? Yet men will not hearken, but run on to their ruin. Were there not a way of receiving, it were vain to call men to return, but there is a ransom found, Jesus Christ, peace and reconciliation through him; and seeing the way is opened, who that have eyes to behold that mercy, will delay any longer, will not hasten unto it, and lay hold upon it? This gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but the pure and sweet word of that new life, which is in Christ, and nothing is so powerful as the doctrine of free grace to convert a soul. If men will perish in multitudes, they must perish, but let those that have a mind to live, come to Christ.—(88.)

Observe the prophecy that was fulfilled in him. This is he that was spoken of

in the beginning of that part of the prophecy of Isaiah which points at gospel times and gospel grace: see Isa. 40. 3, 4. John is here spoken of, as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. John owned it himself, John 1. 23; I am the voice, and that is all: God is the speaker, who makes known his mind by John, as a man does by his voice.

And as one whose business it was to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight; so it was said of him, before he was born, that he should make ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke 1. 17. In the Jewish church and nation, at that time, there was a great decay of piety; the vital truths of religion were corrupted and eaten out by the traditions and injunctions of the elders. The Jews were extremely proud of their privileges, confident of justification by their own righteousness, insensible of sin; and though under the most humbling providences, being lately made a province of the Roman empire, yet they were unhumiliated. They were in the same temper as in Malachi's time, insolent and haughty, and ready to contradict the word of God. John was sent to level these mountains, to take down their high opinion of themselves, and to show them their sins, that the doctrine of Christ might be the more acceptable and effectual. His doctrine of repentance and humiliation is still as necessary as it was then, to prepare the way of the Lord. There is a great deal to be done, to make way for Christ into a soul, to bow the heart for the reception of the Son of David, 2 Sam. 19. 14, and nothing is more needful than the discovery of sin, and a conviction of the insufficiency of our own righteousness. Prejudices must be removed, high thoughts brought down, and captivated to the obedience of Christ. The way of sin and Satan is a crooked way; to prepare a way for Christ, the paths must be made straight, Heb. 12. 13.

See the garb in which John appeared, and the manner of his life, ver. 4. Those who expected the Messiah as a temporal prince, would think that his forerunner must come in great pomp and splendour. Quite the contrary; he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, but mean in the eyes of the world; and, as Christ himself, having no form or comeliness; to intimate betimes, that the glory of Christ's kingdom was to be spiritual, and the subjects of it poor and despised, who derived



their honours, pleasures, and riches, from another world. John appeared in this dress, 1. To show that, like Jacob, he was a plain man, dead to this world, and the delights and gaieties of it. 2. To show that he was a prophet, for prophets wore rough garments, Zech. 13. 4.

His meat was locusts and wild honey; these he mostly fed upon. Locusts were a sort of flying insect, not unfit for food, and allowed as clean, Lev. 11. 22. Wild honey Canaan flowed with, 1 Sam. 14. 26. It was found in the hollows of trees and rocks, where bees built. Those whose business it is to call others to mourn for sin, and to mortify it, ought themselves to live a serious life, a life of self-denial, and contempt of the world. By giving others this example, he made way for Christ. A conviction of the vanity of the world, and every thing in it, is the best preparation for the entertainment of the kingdom of heaven in the heart. Blessed are the poor in spirit. John had spent his youth in such exercises of the soul as were calculated to prepare him for his work.

Great multitudes came to him from the city of Jerusalem, and from all parts of the country; some of all sorts. This was an evidence that it was now a time of great expectation. It was generally thought that the kingdom of God would presently appear; and therefore, when John showed himself to Israel, and lived and preached so very differently from the scribes and pharisees, they were ready to say of him, that he was the Christ, Luke 3. 15. Those who would have the benefit of John's ministry, must go out to him in the wilderness. Those who truly desire the sincere milk of the word, will seek out for it: and those who would learn the doctrine of repentance, must go out from the hurry of this world, and be still. It appears, that of the many who came to John's baptism, there were but few who adhered to it. There may be a multitude of forward hearers, where there are few true believers. Curiosity, and affectation of novelty and variety, may bring many to attend on good preaching, and to be affected for a while, who never are subject to the power of it, Ezek. 33. 31, 32.

Those who received John's doctrine, and submitted to his discipline, were baptized of him in Jordan, thereby professing their repentance, and their belief that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand. They testified their repentance by confessing

their sins. The Jews had been taught to justify themselves; but John teaches them to accuse themselves, and not to rest, as they used to do, in the general confession of sin made for all Israel, once a year, upon the day of atonement; but to make a particular acknowledgment, every one of the plague of his own heart. Those only are ready to receive Jesus Christ as their righteousness, who are brought with sorrow and shame to own their guilt, 1 John 1. 8. No deviations from this good old way will be found improvements. If repentance were more fully and clearly preached, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world would not so often be pointed out in vain. The benefits of the kingdom of heaven, now at hand, were thereupon scaled to them by baptism. He washed them with water, in token that God would cleanse them from all their iniquities. Christ's question concerning John's baptism, Was it from heaven, or of men? implied, that there might be baptisms of men, who pretended not to a Divine mission; but his was from heaven, and was distinguished with this character, —it was the baptism of repentance, Acts 19. 4. Confession of sin must always be accompanied with holy resolutions, in the strength of Divine grace, not to return to it again.

Though baptisms had been in use, John was singular in baptizing all his disciples without distinction of sect or character, thereby intimating, that by nature and practice all were polluted, and could not be admitted among the true people of God, unless washed from their sins in the fountain Christ was about to open, Zech. 13. 1. The Jews were taught, by John's use of baptism, that their outward advantages would never qualify them to enjoy the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, except their hearts were washed from the love and pollution of sin by the Holy Ghost, as they were by nature born in sin, children of wrath, even as the Gentiles.

3. It was customary in the east, when a monarch was about to travel, to send forward persons to prepare the way by removing obstacles, filling up hollows, &c. To this practice the imagery used by the prophet, Isa. 40. 3, alludes.

4. The garments worn by John probably were of a coarse cloth, spun from camel's hair, used by many among the Jews, and still common in the east, often with a mixture of wool. The locusts were the insect of that name, see Exod. 10. and Joel 2. They are a common food in the east. Wild honey abounded in Judea. The palm and other trees also give a sweet juice, which is called honey by some Jewish writers. Harmer considers there

was simplicity rather than austerity in John's mode of life.

6. This confession wholly differed in every particular from the Romish auricular confession.

§ 15. Ver. 7—12. *John reproves the pharisees and sadducees.*

John preached repentance, in consideration of the kingdom of heaven being at hand. Application is the life of preaching, so it was of John's preaching. He applied it to the pharisees and sadducees that came to his baptism, ver. 7. These were two noted sects among the Jews; a third was the essenes, who affected retirement, and declined busying themselves in public affairs. The pharisees were zealous for the ceremonies; they laid their chief stress on outward observances, often in minute matters, and according to their own traditions and inventions, neglecting the weightier matters of the moral law, and the spiritual meaning of their legal ceremonies. Others of them were detestable hypocrites, making their pretences to holiness a cloak for iniquity. The sadducees ran into the other extreme, denying the existence of spirits, and a future state. They were the scornful infidels of that time and country. The application was plain and home, and directed to their consciences; it could hardly be expected that such hypocrites and infidels would think of fleeing from wrath, without some extraordinary warning.

Here is a word of conviction and awakening. The title John gives them, is, O generation of vipers. Christ gave them the same title, ch. 12. 34; 23. 33. They were, though specious, yet venomous and poisonous, and full of malice and enmity to every thing that was good. They gloried that they were the seed of Abraham; but John showed them that they were the serpent's seed, John 8. 44. It becomes the ministers of Christ to be bold in showing sinners their true character. The alarm he gives them, is, Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? They were in danger of the wrath to come; their hearts were hardened in sin, the pharisees by their parade of religion, and the sadducees by their arguments against religion. There is a wrath to come. It is the great concern of every one of us to flee from that wrath. It is wonderful mercy that we are fairly warned to flee from that wrath. God has warned us, who delights not in our ruin; he warns by the written word, by ministers, by con-

science. These warnings sometimes startle those who seem very much hardened.

Here is a word of exhortation and direction, ver. 8. Repentance is seated in the heart. There it is as a root; but in vain do we pretend to have it there, if we do not bring forth the fruits of it, by forsaking all sin, and cleaving to that which is good. Those are not worthy the name of penitents, or their privileges, who say they are sorry for their sins, and yet persist in them. It becomes penitents to be humble and low in their own eyes, to be thankful for the least mercy; patient under the greatest affliction, to be watchful against all appearances of sin, and approaches towards it, to abound in every duty, and to be charitable in judging others.

Here is a word of caution, not to trust to their external privileges, ver. 9. There is a great deal which carnal hearts are apt to say within themselves, to put by the convincing, commanding power of the word of God, which ministers should labour to meet with and anticipate. God takes notice of what we say within ourselves, and is acquainted with all the false rests of the soul, and the fallacies with which it deludes itself, but which it will not discover, lest it should be undeceived. Many hide the lie that ruins them, because they are ashamed to own it. Now John shows them what their pretence was; We have Abraham to our father; we are not sinners of the Gentiles; it is fit indeed that they should be called to repent, but we are Jews, a holy nation, a peculiar people, what is this to us? The word does us no good, when we will not take it as spoken to us, and belonging to us. Though descended from pious ancestors; blessed with a religious education; our lot cast in families where the fear of God is; and we have good friends that advise us, and pray for us; what will all this avail us, if we do not repent, and live a life of repentance? Multitudes, by resting in the honours and outward advantages of their visible church-membership, take up short of heaven.

They thought that, being the seed of Abraham, they were the only people God had in the world; but John shows them the folly of this conceit. He was now baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, John 1. 28, where the children of Israel passed over; and there were the twelve stones, one for each tribe, Joshua set up for a memorial, Josh. 4. 20. It is not unlikely

that he pointed to those stones, which God could make to be, more than in representation, the twelve tribes of Israel. Some think he pointed to the heathen soldiers present, telling the Jews that God would raise up a church for himself among the Gentiles. Or, take it thus; Stones themselves shall be owned as Abraham's seed, rather than such hard, dry, barren sinners as you are.

Here is a word of terror to the careless and secrete pharisees and sadducees, and other Jews, ver. 10. Be sensible, 1. How strict and short your trial is; now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, now you are marked for ruin, and cannot avoid it but by a speedy and sincere repentance. Our corrupt hearts cannot be made to produce this good fruit, unless the regenerating Spirit of Christ graft the good word of God upon them. 2. How sore and severe your doom will be, if you do not improve this. Every tree, however high in gifts and honours, however green in external professions and performances, if it bring not forth good fruit, the fruits meet for repentance, is hewn down, unworthy to have room in God's vineyard, and is cast into the fire of God's wrath—the fittest place for barren trees: what else are they good for? If not fit for fruit, they are fit for fuel. Probably, this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Now God would make a full end, wrath was coming on them to the utmost.

Here is a word of instruction concerning Jesus Christ, in whom all John's preaching centered, ver. 11. Christ's ministers preach, not themselves, but him. Here is the dignity and pre-eminence of Christ above John. I indeed baptize you with water, that is the utmost I can do. Sacraments derive not their efficacy from those who administer them; they can only apply the sign; it is Christ gives the thing signified, 1 Cor. 3. 6; 2 Kings 4. 31. But he that comes after me, is mightier than I. It is great comfort to faithful ministers, to think that Jesus Christ can do that for them, and by them, which they cannot do; his strength is perfected in their weakness. Those whom God puts honour upon, are thereby made very humble and low in their own eyes; willing to be abased, so that Christ may be magnified; to be any thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

He shows the design and intention of

Christ's appearing, which they were now speedily to expect. When it was prophesied that John should be sent as Christ's forerunner, Mal. 3. 1, it immediately follows, The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come, and shall sit as a refiner. And, after the coming of Elijah, the day comes that shall burn as an oven, Mal. 4. 1; to which the Baptist seems to refer.

Christ will come to make a distinction by the powerful working of his grace; to convert their whole souls in due time into his own pure and holy nature. No outward forms can make us clean. No ordinances, by whomsoever administered, or after whatever mode, can supply the want of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. This alone can produce that purity of heart, and those holy affections which accompany salvation. It is Christ's prerogative to baptize with the Holy Ghost. This he did in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon the apostles, Acts 1. 5. This he does in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, given to them that ask him, Luke 11. 13; John 7. 38. 39; see Acts 11. 16. Those who are baptized with the Holy Ghost, are baptized as with fire. Is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of judgment, as a Spirit of burning, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heaven-ward.

Christ also comes to make distinction by the final determinations of his judgment ver. 12. His ability to distinguish, as the eternal Wisdom of the Father, who sees all by a true light, and his authority to distinguish, as the person to whom all judgment is committed, is the fan that is in his hand, Jer. 15. 7. Now he sits as a refiner. Observe here, the visible church is Christ's floor, Isa. 21. 10. In this floor there is a mixture of wheat and chaff. True believers are as wheat, substantial, useful, and valuable; hypocrites are as chaff, light and empty, useless and worthless, carried about with every wind; these are mixed, good and bad, under the same external profession, and in the same visible communion. There is a day coming when the wheat and chaff shall be separated. Something of this kind is often done in this world, but it is the day of the

last judgment that will be the distinguishing day, which will infallibly determine concerning doctrines and works, 1 Cor. 3. 13, and concerning persons, ch. 25. 32, 33, when saints and sinners shall be parted for ever. Heaven is the garner into which Jesus Christ will shortly gather all his wheat, and not a grain of it shall be lost. In heaven the saints are brought together, and no longer scattered; they are safe, and no longer exposed; separated from corrupt neighbours without, and corrupt affections within, and there is no chaff among them. Hell is the unquenchable fire, which will burn up the chaff, which will certainly be the portion and punishment, and everlasting destruction of hypocrites and unbelievers. Here life and death, good and evil, are set before us: according as we now are in the field, we shall be then in the floor.

11. The words here used, literally, "He who is coming," were then generally used to denote the expected Messiah.

12. The threshing floors in the east were generally a high piece of ground, rolled and beaten very hard and firm, on which the sheaves were laid, and the grain trodden out by oxen, and afterwards separated from the straw and chaff; the latter probably was burned for manure.

§ 16. Ver. 13—17. *The baptism of Jesus.*

It was an instance of Christ's great humility, that he would offer himself to be baptized of John; that he who knew no sin, would submit to the baptism of repentance. Christ preached humility, preached it by his example, preached it to all, especially to young ministers. Before honour is humility.

John forbade him. Christ's gracious condescensions are so surprising, as to appear at first incredible to the strongest believers; so deep and mysterious, that even those who know his mind well, by reason of darkness, start objections against the will of Christ. John had now obtained a great name, and was universally respected; yet see how humble he is still.

John thinks it necessary that he should be baptized of Christ; I have need to be baptized of thee with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as of fire, for that was Christ's baptism. Though John was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, Luke 1. 15, yet he acknowledges he had need to be baptized with that baptism. Those who have much of the Spirit of God while here, see that they need to apply to Christ for more. John has need to be baptized; though he was the greatest that ever was born of woman, yet he is

polluted, as others of Adam's seed, and owns he has need of cleansing. The purest souls are most sensible of their own remaining impurity, and seek most earnestly for spiritual washing. It is no disparagement to the greatest of men, to confess that they are undone without Christ and his grace. Even those who were before Christ in time, depended on him, received from him, and looked to him. Observe how John speaks of the case of his own soul; I have need to be baptized of thee. Ministers, who preach to others, and baptize others, are concerned to preach to themselves, and to be themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost.

John therefore thinks it very strange that Christ should be baptized by him. Does the holy Jesus, who is separated from sinners, come to be baptized by a sinner, as a sinner, and among sinners? How can this be? Christ's coming to us may well be wondered at.

Christ does not deny that John had need to be baptized of him, yet he will now be baptized of John. Christ is *now* in a state of humiliation. He is not only found in fashion as a man, but is made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and therefore *now* let him be baptized of John; as in he needed to be washed, though perfectly pure; and thus he was made sin for us, though he knew no sin. John's baptism is the present dispensation, and therefore Jesus will now be baptized with water; but his baptizing with the Holy Ghost is reserved for hereafter, many days hence, Acts 1. 5. Those who are of the greatest attainments in gifts and graces, should bear testimony to instituted ordinances, by humble and diligent attendance on them, that they may give a good example. What we see God owns, and while we see he does so, we must own. It must be so now, because *now* is the time for Christ's appearing in public; thus he must be made manifest to Israel, and be signaled by wonders from heaven, in that act of his own, which was most self-abasing.

The reason Christ gives for it. Our Lord Jesus looked upon it as well becoming him to fulfil all righteousness, to own every Divine institution, and to show his readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts. Thus it becomes him to justify God, and approve his wisdom, in sending John to prepare his way by the baptism of repentance. Thus he recommended the gospel ordinance of baptism

to his church, put honour upon it, and showed what virtue he designed to put into it. With the will of Christ, and this reason for it, John was entirely satisfied. No pretence of humility should make us decline our duty.

The baptism of Christ was graced with a special display of glory. Others that were baptized, stayed to confess their sins; but Christ, having no sins to confess, went up immediately from the water. He went up straight way, as one that entered upon his work with the utmost cheerfulness and resolution.

Now the heavens were opened unto him. This was to encourage him to go on in his undertaking, with the prospect of the glory and joy that were set before him; and to encourage us to receive him, and submit to him. In and through Jesus Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men.

He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, or, as a dove, and coming or lighting upon him. Christ saw it, Mark 1. 10, and John saw it, John 1. 32—34, and it is probable that the standers-by saw it. In the beginning of the old world, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, Gen. 1. 2. So here, in the beginning of this new world, Christ, as God, needed not to receive the Holy Ghost, but it was foretold that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, Isa. 11. 2; 61. 1, and here he did so; for he was to be a Prophet; and to execute the prophetic office, not by his Divine nature, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was to be the Head of the church; and the Spirit descended upon him, by him to be derived to all believers, in his gifts, graces, and comforts. Christ received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men.

This descent of the Spirit upon Christ, showed that he was endued with his sacred influences without measure. The Spirit of Christ resembles the gentle dove,—not any fierce bird of prey. Furious contests therefore cannot spring from his influence, but banish him from our hearts and our assemblies; they weaken the evidences of our adoption, and mar our comfort. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. By abounding in these we best glorify the triune God of our salvation, to whose service we were devoted, when we were bap-

tized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory for ever.

At the same time a voice was heard from heaven. God the Father, himself acknowledging Jesus as his beloved Son, in whose person, mediation, and offices, he was well pleased and fully satisfied. Thereby it was intimated that those who would find acceptance with the Father, must hear, believe, and obey his beloved Son, ask all blessings in his name and for his sake. Thus at Christ's baptism, there was a manifestation of the three persons in the sacred Trinity. The Father appointing and confirming the Son to be Mediator; the Son solemnly accepting the designation, and entering upon the work; the Holy Spirit descending on him, to be through his mediation communicated to his people, to apply his salvation to their souls.

My beloved Son! In this word lies all the comfort of a christian. None can please, or be accepted, out of him; but in him is all acceptance of all that are in him. Under the robe of Jesus thou art lovely in the Father's eye. Let not the Father then see us but in the Son, and then all is well.—(88.)

In Him, our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable, for He is the altar that sanctifies every gift, 1 Pet. 2. 5. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire, but in Christ, a reconciled Father. This is the sum of the whole gospel; it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that God has declared, by a voice from heaven, that Jesus Christ is his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, with which we must by faith cheerfully concur, and say that he is our beloved Saviour, in whom we are well pleased.

16 The term here used may designate either a visible form of a dove, or, more probably, only the manner of descent, like the hovering motion of a dove. Some apprehend the form or symbol here visible, was a flame of fire, as Acts 2.

## CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1—11. M. 1. 12, 13. L. 4. 1—13.  
Ver. 12. M. 1. 14. L. 4. 14. J. 4. 3.  
Ver. 13—16. L. 4. 31.  
Ver. 18—22. M. 1. 16—20. L. 5. 1—11.  
Ver. 23—25. M. 1. 39. L. 4. 44.

§ 17. Ver. 1—11. *The temptation of Christ.*

Concerning Christ's temptation, observe, immediately after the heavens were opened to him, and the Spirit descended on him, and he was declared to be the

Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, he is tempted; great privileges, and special tokens of Divine favour, will not secure from being tempted. The assurance of our sonship is the best preparation for temptation. If the Holy Spirit witness to our adoption, that will furnish an answer to all the suggestions of the evil spirit.

He was directed to the combat. Our care must be, not to enter into temptation. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves; but whithersoever God leads us, we may hope he will go along with us.

Christ was led to be tempted of the devil, and of him only. Others are tempted, when they are drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed, Jam. 1. 14; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, therefore he was led as a champion into the field, to be tempted only by the devil.

Now Christ's temptation is an instance of his own condescension and humiliation, an occasion of Satan's confusion, and matter of comfort to all the saints. In the temptation of Christ it appears, that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring in his temptations; but it appears withal, that he is not invincible. It is a comfort to us that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only, and may be the lot of those with whom God is well pleased. And we have a High Priest who knows, by experience, what it is to be tempted, who therefore is the more tenderly touched with the feeling of our infirmities in an hour of temptation, Heb. 2. 18; 4. 15. But it is much more a comfort to think that Christ conquered, being tempted, and conquered for us.

Christ needed not to fast for mortification; he had no corrupt desires to be subdued; yet he fasted, that he might give Satan both occasion and advantage against him; and so make his victory over him the more illustrious. Also that he might sanctify and recommend fasting to us when we are reduced to straits, and are destitute of daily food, or when it is requisite for keeping under the body, or quickening the soul in prayer. When he was fasting forty days, he was not hungry; converse with Heaven was instead of meat and drink to him, but he was afterward an hungered; to show that he was really and truly man; and he took upon him

our natural infirmities, that he might atone for us.

What Satan aimed at, in all his temptations, was, to bring Christ to sin against God, so to render him for ever incapable of being a Sacrifice for the sin of others.

1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him. The devil is the tempter, and therefore he is Satan, an adversary; for those are our worst enemies who entice us to sin. The tempter came to Christ in a visible appearance, not terrible and affrighting, as afterward in his agony in the garden. Satan is most dangerous when most plausible.

Christ began to be hungry; Satan did not urge him to create a feast for indulgence, but to turn a stone into a loaf for necessity. It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition; and the more ingenious he is to take advantage against us, the more industrious we must be to give him none. Those who are reduced to straits, have need to double their guard. Christ was lately declared to be the Son of God, and here the devil tempts him to doubt of that. Had not the devil known that the Son of God was to come into the world, he would not have said this; nor durst he have said it, if Christ had not now drawn a veil over his glory.

Outward afflictions are the great arguments Satan uses to make the people of God question their sonship; as if afflictions could not consist with God's fatherly love when really they proceed therefrom. The devil aims to shake our faith in the word of God, and to bring us to question its truth.

He says, Thou hast now an opportunity to show thou art the Son of God. Command it to be done. The devil is for nothing that is humbling: and he gains his point, if he can but bring men from dependence upon God, and fill them with an opinion of their self-sufficiency.

See how this temptation was resisted and overcome. Christ's power, which soon after turned water into wine, could have turned stones into bread; but he would not. It would have been distrusting his Father's care of him, and gratifying Satan, by doing a thing at his motion.

Christ answered all the temptations of Satan with, It is written. He is himself the eternal Word, and could have produced the mind of God without having recourse to the writings of Moses; but he put honour upon the scripture, and, to set

us an example, he appealed to what was written in the law. This method we must take, when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation with, It is written. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, the only offensive weapon in all the christian armoury, Eph. 6. 17; and we may say of it in our spiritual conflicts, as David of Goliath's sword, None is like that.

Christ, as a man, was bound to obey the whole law, every thing which would have been in the least sinful for us, in like circumstances, would have been inconsistent with the very end of his coming into the world. It is true, God, in his providence, ordinarily, maintains men by bread out of the earth, Job 28. 5; but he can, if he pleases, make use of other means to keep men alive; any thing that God shall order and appoint, will be as good a livelihood for man as bread.

As in our greatest abundance we must not think to live without God, so in our greatest straits we must learn to live upon God; and when all ordinary means of succour and support are cut off, yet then we must not think to command what we will, but must humbly pray for what he thinks fit to give us, and be thankful. Let us learn not to take any irregular courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing: in some way or other the Lord will provide.

2. Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection. Finding him so confident of his Father's care, in point of nourishment, he endeavours to draw him to presume upon that care, in point of safety. We are in danger, both on the right hand and on the left, and therefore must take heed, lest, when we avoid one extreme, we are brought, by the artifices of Satan, to run into another. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls.

He took Christ, not by force and against his will, but moved him to go, and went with him. Now observe, how submissive Christ was, in suffering himself to be hurried thus, that he might let Satan do his worst, and yet conquer him. How comfortable is it, that Christ, who let loose this power of Satan against himself, does not in like manner let it loose against us, but restrains it, for he knows our frame! How subtle the devil was, in the choice of the place for his temptations! Intending

to solicit Christ to ostentation of his own power, and vain-glorious presumption upon God's providence, he places him upon the temple. There he might make himself remarkable, and prove himself the Son of God, not, as he was urged in the former temptation, in the obscurity of a wilderness, but before multitudes.

Jerusalem is here called the holy city; for so it was in name and profession. But there is no city on earth so holy as to exempt and secure us from the devil and his temptations. Satan has no objection to holy places as the scene of his assaults. Let us not, therefore, in any place, be off our watch. Nay, the holy city is the place, where he does, with the greatest advantage and success, tempt men to pride and presumption; but, blessed be God, into the Jerusalem above, that holy city, no unclean thing shall enter; there we shall be for ever out of temptation. He set Christ upon a pinnacle of the temple, which was so very high, that it would make a man's head giddy to look down to the bottom. Pinnacles of the temple are places of temptation. High places are so; they are slippery places; advancement in the world makes a man a fair mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. Those who would take heed of falling, must take heed of climbing. High places in the church are, in a special manner, dangerous. Those who excel in gifts, who are in eminent stations, and have gained great reputation, have need to be always humble; for Satan will aim to puff them up with pride, that they may fall into condemnation.

If thou be the Son of God, now show thyself to the world, and prove thyself to be so; cast thyself down, and then thou wilt be admired, as under the special protection of Heaven. Thou wilt be received, as coming with a special commission from Heaven.

Observe, The devil said, Cast thyself down. The power of Satan is a limited power. Yet, if the devil had cast him down, that had been his suffering only, not his sin. Whatever real mischief is done us, it is of our own doing. The devil can but persuade, he cannot compel; he can but say, Cast thyself down; he cannot cast us down. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and not forced, but enticed. Perhaps Satan even presumed that he should in this way tempt Jesus to end his own life.

He urged this motion with a scripture. Is Satan so well versed in scripture as to be able to quote it so readily? It seems he is so. It is possible for a man to have his head full of scripture notions, and his mouth full of scripture expressions, while his heart is full of reigning enmity to God and all goodness. In this quotation there was something right. It is true, there is such a promise of the ministration of the angels, for the protection of the saints. The devil knows it by experience; for he finds his attempts against them fruitless. He was also right in applying it to Christ, for to him all the promises of the protection of the saints, primarily and eminently belong, and to them, in and through him. Whether this were understood as a promise to believers, or as a prophecy relating to Christ, Satan suggested that it equally insured his safety.

But there was a great deal wrong in what he did. He misquoted it. The promise is, *They shall keep thee*; but in all thy ways—not otherwise. If we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection. Now this word made against the tempter, and therefore he left it out. If Christ had cast himself down, he had been out of his way, for he had no call so to expose himself: by omitting such a concluding sentence, christians are often seduced out of their way. It is good for us to consult the scriptures, and not take things upon trust, that we may not be imposed upon by those who mangle the word of God. Satan misapplied it; and that was worse. Scripture is abused when it is pressed to patronise sin; and when men thus wrest it to their own temptation, they do it to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16. This promise is firm, and stands good. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound; throw ourselves down, that the angels may bear us up? God forbid. We must not put the power, truth, and love of God, to unnecessary trials.

Christ overcame this temptation, as the former, with, *It is written*. The devil's misuse of scripture did not prevent Christ from using it. He presently urges, Deut. 6. 16, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. If Christ cast himself down, it would be tempting God. It would be requiring a further confirmation of that which was well confirmed. It would be requiring a special preservation in doing that which he had no call to do. If we expect

that because God has promised not to forsake us, therefore he should follow us out of the way of our duty; that because he has promised to keep us, we may wilfully thrust ourselves into danger, and may expect the desired end, without using the appointed means—this is presumption, this is tempting God.

Our God will certainly keep his children from final apostasy; therefore they need not be dejected by feelings of their own weakness; but the enemy will suggest that they may venture into perilous situations, and yet expect God to preserve them. But let all beware of thus mangling scripture; and the abuse of scripture should not induce us to neglect it, but by plain texts, and in their obvious meaning, to answer temptations grounded on misapplication. We must not promise ourselves more than God has promised us.

3. Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the proffer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. Hence let us observe concerning Satan's temptations, that they often come in at the eye, which is blinded to the things that it should see, and dazzled with the vanities it should be turned from. Temptations commonly take their rise from the world, and the things of it. The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon.

How vain his promise was! All these things will I give thee. Satan seems to take it for granted, that in the former temptations he had proved that Christ was not the Son of God, because he had not given him those evidences of it which he demanded. Satan makes an easy prey of men, when he can persuade them to think themselves abandoned of God.

How vile the condition was! If thou wilt fall down and worship me. Fain would he draw Christ into his interests, and persuade him to teach the Gentile idolatry, and to introduce it again among the Jews, and then the nations of the earth would soon flock in to him. The best of saints may be tempted to the worst of sins. It is their affliction, but while there is no consent to it, nor approbation of it, it is not their sin; Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence and detestation; Get thee hence, Satan! Some temptations are openly wicked; they are not to be disputed with, but rejected. It



is a just indignation which rises at the proposal of any thing that reflects on God. Nay, whatever is an abominable thing, which we are sure the Lord hates, we must thus abominate. It is good to be peremptory in resisting temptation.

Christ's argument is from Deut. 6. 13; 10. 20. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. It is good to make our answers to temptation as full, and yet as brief, as may be. The law of religious worship is of eternal obligation: though Christ abrogated and altered many institutions of worship, yet this fundamental law—That God only is to be worshipped—he came to enforce.

When Satan had done his worst, had tempted Christ with all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and found that he could not prevail with that temptation with which he had overthrown so many thousands of the children of men, then he leaves him; then he begins to conclude, that he is the Son of God, and that it is in vain to tempt him any further. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us; he will yield, if we keep our ground. The Captain of our salvation has defeated and disarmed him; we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory. But where temptations are strong, and the evil evident, we must not parley a moment; the soul that deliberates is already almost vanquished. We find but few who can decidedly reject such baits; yet what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

The holy angels came, and attended our victorious Redeemer. While the devil was making his assaults upon our Saviour, their immediate attendance and ministrations were suspended, that it might appear that he vanquished Satan in his own strength. As there is a world of wicked, malicious spirits that fight against Christ, and his church, and all particular believers, so there is a world of holy, blessed spirits engaged and employed for them.

Christ was thus succoured after the temptation, for his encouragement to go on in his undertaking: and for our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted; therefore we may expect, not only that he will sympathize with his tempted people, but that he will come with seasonable relief.

Christ, having been thus made remark-

able by the voice of the Father, the descent of the Spirit, his victory over devils, and his dominion over angels, was qualified to appear in the visible world as the Mediator between God and man; for consider how great this man was!

1. The wilderness where our Lord was tempted is generally supposed to be the highest part of a mountainous region, now called Quarantaria, from the forty days Christ is supposed to have passed there, but anciently the rock Rimmon, Jud. 20. 45, situated in the tribe of Benjamin, near the centre of the land. Others suppose it to have been the desert of Sinni, particularly noticing that region to have abounded in wild animals, agreeably to what is mentioned by St. Mark in the parallel passage. Some writers have supposed that the whole was merely presented to Jesus in a vision; but such an idea is utterly groundless and undeserving of serious remark.

4. Or, By every thing that God is pleased to appoint.—*Campbell*.

5. There is nothing in the original to give any ground to the vulgar notion, that Satan carried our Lord through the air. Instead of pinnacle, in the common meaning of the word, a part of the roof of the temple is supposed to be intended, probably the battlement of the king's portico, which overhung the precipice on the east and south sides of the temple. Josephus states this was of such a height that none could look down without dizziness. The original has "the pinnacle," not "a pinnacle." See, On the Greek article, in the general notes to this volume.

8. Considerable difference of opinion has prevailed as to the strict meaning of the words here translated, "the kingdoms of the world." The principal modern commentators show that they may be considered as referring to the provinces into which Judea was then divided, the greater part of which were visible from Quarantaria, and other high mountains. See also note on Luke 4. 5.

9, 10. The words here translated "worship" and "serve," imply religious adoration and service. Satan in Hebrew implies adversary. *Campbell* considers that it was used by our Lord as an appellative, being so adopted in the Syriac.

23. 25. Ver. 12-17. *The opening of Christ's ministry in Galilee.*

Several passages in the other gospels, especially in that of St. John, are supposed to intervene between Christ's temptation and his preaching in Galilee. When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, then he went into Galilee, ver. 12. John had done his work by the baptism of repentance, now therefore Jesus arises.

He preached in Galilee, a part of the country that lay furthest from Jerusalem. Nazareth was the first place which refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. It is just with God to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. He came and dwelt in Capernaum, a city of much resort, on the sea of Tiberias, called also the lake of Gennesaret.

The prophecy fulfilled in this is Isa. 9. 1, 2, but with some variation. The evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them. When Christ came to Capernaum, the gospel came to the places round about; such diffusive influence did the Sun of righteousness cast!

Those who are without Christ, are in the dark. They were sitting in this condition—a contented posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations. But their condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel light. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not light in the Lord? When Christ and his gospel came among them, it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there. Light discovers and directs; so does the gospel.

It is a great light; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel revelations. Great in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away. Jesus had been preaching, before this, in Judea, and had made and baptized many disciples, John 4. 1; but his preaching was not so public and constant as now it began to be. The subject which Christ dwelt upon in his preaching, was the very same that John had preached upon, ch. 3. 2; for the gospel is the same for substance under various dispensations; the commands the same, and the reasons to enforce them the same. Fear God, and, by repentance, honour him, Rev. 14. 6, 7.

He that gives all to all, disdains not to preach the same sense and the same words as John the Baptist. There is certainly a pride and vanity in the minds of men in always affecting to speak or hear of new things. God's voice, more regarded and owned, would often make that sweet which we despise.—(88.)

The doctrine of repentance is right gospel doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, but the gracious Jesus, preached repentance. The reason is still the same; The kingdom of heaven is at hand; for it was not reckoned to be fully come, till

the pouring out of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension.

13. The sea referred to here, and in many other passages of the evangelists, was the lake of Genesaret, or sea of Tiberias, a large inland water in the north-east part of Judea, seventeen miles long and eight broad. It has been visited by many modern travellers whose description of it exactly agrees with the circumstances recorded concerning it in the gospels.

15. These words are not an exact translation of the Hebrew. *Rundolph* considers the difficulty may be removed by adding the first words of Isa. 9. to the former chapter, as they are in the old versions. Then the words may be rendered, "As the former time made vile the land of Zabulon and the land of Nephtali, so the latter time shall make it glorious," &c.; a prophecy signally fulfilled by our Saviour's appearance and residence in those parts. A future event is often described in prophecy by the past tense, to indicate its certainty.

§ 26. Ver. 18—22. *Call of Simon, Andrew, James, and John.*

When Christ began to preach, he began to gather disciples, who should then be the hearers, and afterwards the preachers of his doctrine, who should then be witnesses of his miracles, and afterwards testify concerning them. He went not to Herod's court, not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee, among the fishermen. The same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew, could have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible. Christ chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

We have an account of the call of two sets of brothers in these verses—Peter and Andrew, James and John; the two former, probably the two latter also, had acquaintance with Christ before, John 1. 40, 41, but were not till now called into close and constant attendance upon him. Christ does not despise the poor; the poor are evangelized, and the Fountain of honour sometimes gives more abundant honour to that part which most lacked. They were unlearned men, not bred up to books or literature. Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. Yet this will not justify the intrusion of ignorant and unqualified men into the work of the ministry. Extraordinary gifts of knowledge and utterance are not now to be expected; requisite qualifications must be obtained in an ordinary way. They were men of business, who had been bred up to labour. Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to

Christ, and it is no hindrance to a holy life. Idle people lie more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God. Those who have learned to bear hardships, and to run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

James and John were with their father Zebedee. It is a happy and hopeful thing to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful. They were all employed, all very busy, and none idle. When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. Am I in Christ? is a very needful question to ask ourselves; and, next to that, Am I in my calling? They were differently employed; two of them were fishing, and two mending their nets. Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying. Mending nets is, in its season, as necessary work as fishing.

The call was, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. They had followed Christ before, as ordinary disciples, John 1. 37; now they were called to a more close and constant attendance, and must leave their calling. Even those who have been called to follow Christ, have need to be called to follow nearer.

Observe, Christ alludes to their former calling. It was usual with Christ to speak of spiritual and heavenly things, under such allusions, and in such expressions, as took rise from common things that offered themselves to his view. Ministers are fishers of men, not to destroy them, but to save them, to gain them to Christ. He qualifies men for this work, and gives them success in it; gives them commission to fish for souls, and wisdom to win them. Those ministers are likely to have comfort in their work, who are thus made by Jesus Christ.

In order to this, he says, Follow me. Those who would preach Christ, must first learn of him. How can we expect to bring others to the knowledge of Christ, if we do not know him well ourselves? Those who would get acquaintance with Christ, must be diligent and constant in their attendance on him. There is no learning comparable to that which is got by following Christ. Those who are to fish for men must therein follow Christ, and must do it as he did, with diligence, faithfulness, and tenderness. Christ is the great Pattern for preachers, and they ought all to be workers together with him.

Those who would follow Christ aright, must leave all things to follow him. Every christian must leave all in affection, must be ready to part with his interest in them, rather than with his interest in Jesus Christ; but those devoted to the work of the ministry are, in a special manner, concerned to disentangle themselves from all the affairs of this life.

This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus encourages us to depend upon the sufficiency of his grace. He speaks, and it is done. The same power goes along with this word of Christ, Follow me, that went along with, Lazarus, come forth; a power to make willing, Ps. 110. 3. It is the good property of all Christ's faithful servants to come when they are called, and to follow their Master wherever he leads them. Being called, they obeyed, and, like Abraham, went out, not knowing whither they went, but knowing very well whom they followed.

§ 28. Ver. 23-25. *Jesus teaches and works miracles in Galilee.*

Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom; the kingdom of heaven, that is, of grace and glory. Wherever he went, he confirmed his Divine mission by a variety of miracles, which were emblems of the healing efficacy of his doctrine, and the influences of the Spirit which accompanied it. We do not now experience the Saviour's miraculous healing power to our bodies; but if we are cured by medicine, the praise is equally his. He is the Physician of our souls; and if we apply to him and follow his directions, he will assuredly heal our maladies. Though we cannot draw others to attend the gospel by miracles, we may recommend the truth by acts of charity, and may thus induce many to attend on that word whereby their souls will be healed, and Satan dispossessed, who now holds them captive.

Three general words are here used. He healed every sickness, disease, or languishing, and all torments and torturing distempers; none was too bad, none too hard, for Christ to heal with a word. Three diseases are specified; the palsy, which is the greatest weakness of the body; lunacy, which is the greatest malady of the mind; and possession of the devil, which is the greatest misery and calamity of both; yet Christ healed all. He is the sovereign Physician, both of soul and body.

Christ, by curing bodily diseases, showed

that his great errand into the world was to cure spiritual maladies. He is the Sun of righteousness, that arises with this healing under his wings. As the Converter of sinners, he is the Physician of souls, and has taught us to call him so, ch. 9. 12, 13. Sin is the sickness, disease, and torment of the soul; Christ came to take away sin, and so to heal these. And the particular accounts of the cures Christ wrought, may not only be applied spiritually, by way of illustration, but are intended to reveal to us spiritual things, and to set before us the way and method of Christ's dealing with souls, in their conversion and sanctification; and those cures are recorded, which were most significant and instructive this way. They are therefore so to be explained and improved, to the honour and praise of that glorious Redeemer, who forgiveth all our iniquities, and so healeth all our diseases.

23, 24. The word translated "sickness" denotes a thoroughly formed disorder, whether acute or chronic; the word rendered "disease" signifies an incipient indisposition or malady, all manner, or, of every sort. "Torments," any torturing malady.—*Bloomfield.* Demoniacs, or possessed with devils: see the general notes to this volume.

## CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1, 12. L. 6. 20—26.  
Ver. 38—48. L. 6. 27—36.

§ 36. Ver. 1, 2. *Christ's sermon on the mount—The circumstances under which it was preached.*

This is the longest public discourse of Christ that is written for our instruction, and every part of it is connected with the great doctrines of salvation which are in other places more plainly stated. The true gospel of Christ is more practical than any other doctrine, and none will be happy in this world or the next who do not seek it from Christ by the rule of his word.

Christ preached this sermon upon a mountain; the law was given upon a mountain; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the christian law. But observe the difference: when the law was given, the Lord spake in thunder and lightning; now, in a still small voice: then the people were ordered to keep at a distance; now they are invited to draw near; a blessed change! If God's grace and goodness are, as certainly they are, his glory, then the glory of the gospel is the glory that excels, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He had before, as

often afterwards, preached in the synagogues; but probably no building contain the multitudes now around him; and a mountain or a field will be consecrated ground, or any day holy time, if the Lord vouchsafe his presence and blessing.

He opened his mouth. This expression marks the gravity with which the Divine Teacher taught, and the importance of what he was going to deliver. He pronounced benedictions as being invested with supreme authority. He interpreted the Divine law, not as a common expounder, but as the supreme Lawgiver, representing the decisions of eternal judgment as depending on himself.—(100.)

One of the ancients remarks upon it—Christ taught much without opening his mouth, that is, by his holy and exemplary life; nay, he taught, when, being led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth; but now he opened his mouth, and taught, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, Prov. 8. 1, 2, 6. Doth not wisdom cry—cry on the top of high places? And the opening of her lips shall be right things. He taught them, according to the promise, Isa. 54. 13; All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. For this purpose he had the tongue of the learned, Isa. 50. 4, and the Spirit of the Lord, Isa. 61. 1. He taught them what was the evil they should abhor, and what the good they should abide and abound in; christianity is not matter of speculation, but is designed to regulate the temper of our minds and the tenour of our conversations.

1. A hill, called the mount of the Beatitudes, to the north of mount Tabor, is generally considered to have been the place where our Lord delivered this discourse; it is an elevation of from two to three hundred feet.

§ 36. Ver. 3—12. *Christ declares who are blessed.*

Blessedness is what all men pursue. But most mistake the end, and form a wrong notion of happiness: then no wonder they miss the way; they choose their own delusions. The general opinion is, Blessed and happy are the rich, and great, and honourable in the world; that spend their days in mirth and their years in pleasure; and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly. Now our Lord Jesus comes to give us another view of blessedness and blessed people. All men seek happiness, but none, excepting those who are taught by the Spirit of God, according to his written word, know wherein it consists, or how it may be obtained.

It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor, by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy who were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness, but even the least in the kingdom of heaven.

It is designed to invite souls to Christ, and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, Deut. 27. 12, &c. There the curses are expressed, and the blessings only implied; here the blessings are expressed, and the curses implied; in both, life and death are set before us; but the law appeared more as a ministration of death, to deter us from sin; the gospel is a dispensation of life, to draw us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be had.

It is designed to let us know what God expects from us. No where is this more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with more exact reference to each other. And this coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ, intimates that from him, and by him, we are to receive both the seed and the fruit, both the grace required, and the glory promised. Nothing passes between God and fallen man but through his hand.

Our Saviour here gives us eight characters of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a christian. Each is variously expressed, so as to suit the nature of the grace or duty recommended. These do not refer to such natural dispositions as may bear some resemblance, but to holy dispositions, produced by Divine grace. And none who have not faith and experience will be persuaded that the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those who long earnestly for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted, are the only happy persons in the world.

Do we ask then who are happy?

1. The poor in spirit are happy. Poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be poor in spirit, is to be contentedly poor, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world, but proud, murmuring, and complaining, and blaming their lot; but, acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we shall be easy

in it, be thankful for what we have, and make the best of it. We shall sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully bear losses and disappointments.

It is also to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. It is to value others, and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves mean, and little, to do good. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy, and we are sinful; that he is all, and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon Christ for our justification, and the Spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. We must call ourselves poor, because always in want of God's grace. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility.

It is those who see their want, bewail their guilt, and thirst after a Redeemer. Who, from the very bottom of a humbled heart, confess, Lord, I am no more able to keep every jot and tittle of thy holy law, than I am capable of atoning for my innumerable sins. Christ must be my righteousness as well as my propitiation, or I am irrecoverably undone.—(31.)

They are blessed. God looks graciously upon them. They are easy to themselves and to all about them, while high spirits are always uneasy.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of grace is composed of such; the kingdom of glory is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The same happiness is promised to the contentedly poor, as to the usefully rich. If I am not able to spend cheerfully for his sake, if I can but want cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. Do not we serve a good Master then?

2. They that mourn are happy. Not those that have mourned, but those that are mourning. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness—the sorrow of the world. Many are afflicted, and become hardened under it. They sorrow as without hope. The Jews expected nothing but carnal rejoicing under the reign of the Messiah; but he came and pronounced those that mourn happy. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness,

by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying afflictions to us. But there is a gracious mourning, an habitual seriousness, a penitential mourning for our own sins; this is godly sorrow, sorrow for sin, looking unto Christ, Zech. 12. 10. That godly sorrow which worketh true repentance, watchfulness, humiliation, and a continual dependence for acceptance on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, with constant application to the Holy Spirit to cleanse away the remaining evil, seem here to be intended. Also a sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others.

These gracious mourners are blessed. They are like to the Lord Jesus, who was a Man of sorrows. They are armed against many temptations that attend vain mirth. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provision is made for their comfort. In heaven, the blessed are perfectly and eternally comforted, and there, all tears are wiped forever from their eyes. It is the joy of our Lord; a mountain of joy, to which our way lies through a vale of tears: see Isa. 66. 10. Such mourners shall be comforted with a sense of God's pardoning mercy, and with peace, hope, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

3. The meek are happy. The meek are those who quietly submit to God—who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent, or return a soft answer; who, in their patience, keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of any thing else. These meek ones are happy, even in this world. They are blessed, for they are like the blessed Jesus, in that wherein particularly they are to learn of him, ch. 11. 29. They shall inherit the earth. Not that they shall always have much of the earth; but this branch of godliness has, in a special manner, the promise of the life that now is. Meekness, however ridiculed, has a real tendency to promote our wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. So that all the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek. Yet there is a natural quietness arising from love of ease, and want of firmness, which must not be mistaken for gospel meekness. It is timid, easily deterred from good, and persuaded to evil. Divine grace operates in rendering timid men more firm and active, as it renders those of an opposite temper more easy and quiet.

4. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. These are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ; conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us; and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ made of God to us Righteousness, and to be made the righteousness of God in him; to have the whole man renewed in righteousness, so as to become a new man, and to bear the image of God; to have an interest in Christ and the promises—this is righteousness. These blessings we must hunger and thirst after. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink; he cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things are wanting. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest. Give me these, or else I die; every thing else is unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough. Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently; so these holy desires are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily, fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant supplies of righteousness; grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means.

Those who thus hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings, are blessed in those desires, and shall be filled with those blessings. Though all desires for grace are not grace, yet such a desire as this is so. It is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Something or other the soul will be hungering and thirsting after; therefore they are blessed who fasten upon the right object, which is satisfying, and who do not pant after the dust of the earth, Amos 2. 7; Isa. 55. 2. They shall be filled with those blessings. It is God only who can fill a soul, whose grace and favour are adequate to its just desires; and he will fill those, who, with a sense of their own emptiness, have recourse to his fullness. The new covenant is such, that those who seek cannot fail to find, for the Spirit that excited this holy desire will lead to Christ.

5. The merciful are happy. Those are

the merciful, who are piously and charitably inclined to pity and help persons in misery. A man may be truly merciful, who has not wherewithal to be liberal; then God accepts the willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must contribute all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and seek to snatch them as brands out of the burning. We must have compassion on those who are in sorrow, and comfort them. Job 16. 5; on those whom we have advantage against, and not be severe with them; on those who are in want, and supply them. Nay, a good man is merciful even to his beast.

The merciful are blessed. It is an evidence of love to God; it will be a satisfaction to ourselves, to be any way instrumental for the benefit of others. The most merciful and charitable cannot pretend to merit, but must fly to mercy. The merciful shall find with God sparing mercy, ch. 6. 14; supplying mercy, Prov. 19. 17; sustaining mercy, Ps. 41. 2. But those shall have judgment without mercy, who show no mercy. The mercy to which the blessing is annexed is learned by looking to the cross of Christ, and the Divine mercy is exercised to sinners through him.

6. The pure in heart are happy; for they shall see God. This is the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes; here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together. True christianity lies in the purity of the heart, the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5; 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires, and from worldly lusts; covetousness is called filthy lucre; from all filthiness of flesh and spirit—from all that which comes out of the heart, and defiles the man. The heart must be purified by faith, and entire for God. Create in me such a clean heart, O God!

Here is the most comprehensive comfort of the blessed; They shall see God. It is the perfection of the soul's happiness to see God. Seeing him, as we may by faith in our present state, is a heaven upon earth; and seeing him, as we shall in the future state, is the heaven of hea-

ven. The happiness of seeing God is promised only to those who are pure in heart: None but the pure are capable of seeing God, nor would it be happiness to the impure. What pleasure could an unsanctified soul take in beholding a holy God? As he cannot endure to look upon their iniquity, so they cannot endure to look upon his purity; nor shall any unclean thing enter into the New Jerusalem; but all that are pure in heart, all that are truly sanctified, have desires wrought in them, which nothing but the sight of God will satisfy; and Divine grace will not leave those desires unsatisfied. This is indeed imperfect in the present life; the remainder of sin is felt a burden and grief, which is one effect and evidence of purity of heart.

7. The peace-makers are happy. It is to love, and desire, and delight in peace; to be in it as in our element, and to study to be quiet. Industiously, as far as we can, to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others. The making of peace is sometimes a thankless office; yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Ministers especially should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote christian love among those under their charge.

Such persons are blessed, for they are working together with Christ, who came into the world to proclaim peace on earth. They shall be called the children of God. God will own them as such, and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace; the Son of God is the Prince of peace; the Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. God will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another. If the peace-makers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers! Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry or intemperate zeal as the marks of his disciples. The children of God are peace-makers, the quiet in the land.

8. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are happy. This is peculiar to christianity; and it is more largely insisted upon than any of the rest. Observe here the case of suffering saints described, and it is a very piteous one. They are persecuted, fined, imprisoned,

banished, stripped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, tortured, delivered to death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the enmity of the serpent's seed against the holy seed, ever since the time of righteous Abel.

They are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Names of reproach are fastened upon them, to render them odious. They are powerfully assailed; things are laid to their charge that they knew not. Those who have had no power in their hands to do them any other mischief, could yet do this. Reviling the saints is persecuting them; and there is no evil so black and horrid, which, at one time or other, has not been said, falsely, of Christ's disciples and followers. But holy tempers will enable a man to bear up under such trials.

All this is for righteousness' sake; then it is for Christ's sake; he is nearly interested in the work of righteousness. It precludes those from this blessedness who suffer for real crimes; it is not the suffering, but the cause that makes the martyr. Those suffer for righteousness' sake, who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and for doing that which is good. Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to; it is really Christ and his righteousness that are persecuted.

Suffering saints are blessed; for they now, in their life-time, receive their evil things, Luke 16. 25. They are blessed, for it is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace, and tokens of his presence, 2 Cor. 1. 5.

They shall be recompensed; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They have a sure title to it, and sweet foretastes of it; and shall ere long be in possession of it. There is nothing in those sufferings that can merit of God; but God will provide that those who lose *for* him, though it be life itself, shall not lose *by* him in the end. This has borne up the suffering saints in all ages—this joy set before them.

So persecuted they the prophets that were before you, ver. 12. It is a comfort to see the way of suffering a beaten road, and an honour to follow such leaders. That grace which was sufficient to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be wanting now. Therefore rejoice, and be exceeding glad; the honour, the pleasure,

and advantage of suffering for Christ, are much more considerable than the pain or shame of it. Not that we must take a pride in our sufferings, but we must take a pleasure in them, as Paul, 2 Cor. 12. 10; as knowing that Christ was therein before us. Especially let us look unto Jesus, lest we be weary and faint in our minds, and yield to impatience and recriminations under our lesser trials.

Blessed Jesus! how different are thy maxims from those of the children of this world! They call the proud happy, and admire the gay, the rich, the powerful, and the victorious. But let a vain world take its gaudy trifles, and dress up the foolish creatures that pursue them. May our souls share in that happiness which the Son of God came to recommend and to procure! May we obtain mercy of the Lord; may we be owned as his children; may we see his face, and inherit his kingdom. With these enjoyments and hopes, we will cheerfully welcome the lowest or the most painful circumstances.—(80.)

§ 36. Ver. 13—16. *Exhortations and warnings.*

Ye are the salt of the earth. This would encourage and support the disciples under their sufferings, that, though treated with contempt, they should really be blessings to the world; the apostles were the salt of the whole earth, for they must go into all the world, to preach the gospel. One handful of that salt would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly. The doctrine of the gospel is as salt; it is penetrating, quick, and powerful, Heb. 4. 12; it reaches the heart, Acts 2. 37. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. We read of the savour of the knowledge of Christ, 2 Cor. 2. 14; for all other learning is insipid without that. Salt was required in all the sacrifices, Lev. 2. 13. Christians, especially ministers, are the salt of the earth. If they are such as they should be, what great blessings are they to the world! Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were as a vast heap, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace. If they are not such as they should be, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavoury, unsound in doctrine, unholy in life, vain and carnal in conversation; if a christian be so, especially if a minister



he so, his condition is very sad. If a man can take up the profession of Christ, and yet remain graceless, no other doctrine, no other means, can be applied, to make him savoury. He is unprofitable; It is thenceforth good for nothing; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? He shall be cast out. Let God be glorified in the shame and rejection of those by whom he has been reproached.

Ye are the light of the world. Truly the light is sweet, it is welcome; the light of the first day of the world was so, when it shone out of darkness; so is the morning light of every day; so was the gospel, and those that spread it, to all truly wise people. The world sat in darkness, Christ raised up his disciples to shine in it, and diffuse his truth and salvation, where otherwise darkness and wickedness would reign undisturbed. Christ is the true Light of the world, John 8. 12; his disciples shine by light derived from him.

As the lights of the world, they are illustrious and conspicuous, and they have many eyes upon them. Some admire them, commend them, and study to imitate them; others envy, hate, censure, and study to blast them. They are concerned to walk circumspectly; they must take heed of every thing that looks ill, because they are so much looked at. The disciples of Christ were obscure men before he called them, but the character he put upon them dignified them.

As the lights of the world, they are intended to give light to others, ver. 15, and therefore they shall be set up as lights. See here how our light must shine—by doing such good works as men may see; such works as are of good report, and as will give cause to think well of christianity. We must do good works that may be seen to the edification of others, but not that they may be seen to our own ostentation. What lies between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open to the sight of men, we must study to make suitable to our profession, and praiseworthy, Phil. 4. 8.

See for what end our light must shine—That those who see your good works, may be brought, not to glorify *you*, which the pharisees aimed at, and it spoiled all their performances, but to glorify your Father which is in heaven. The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do in religion. We must not

only endeavour to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. The sight of our good works will do this, by furnishing them with matter for praise. Also with motives to piety. That they may be convinced of the truth and excellency of the christian religion, may be provoked to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God. The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints, may do much toward the conversion of sinners; those who are unacquainted with religion, may hereby be brought to know it. Examples teach.

13. Salt was largely consumed in the temple-sacrifices, and considerable quantities were stored in the temple for use. Rock salt loses its savour in time, and what was thus spoiled, we are told, was scattered over the pavement to render it less slippery in wet weather. *Maunderell* mentions, that in the valley of salt near Aleppo he found the surface, which had been some time exposed to the sun, rain, and air, had perfectly lost its savour. The nature of salt is to correct the taste of that to which it is applied; so the doctrines of the christian faith and its teachers are to correct and improve those they teach.

15. Bushel; a Roman measure called modius, which answers to the Hebrew seah, somewhat more than a peck. Candlestick; a lamp, or lamp-stand.

§ 36. Ver. 17—20. *Christ came to confirm the law.*

The Saviour of souls is the destroyer of nothing but the works of the devil; of nothing that comes from God, much less of those excellent precepts which we have from Moses and the prophets. No, he came to fulfil them. That is, to obey the commands of the law, Gal. 4. 4. He in all respects did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing. So that the moral law would to the end of time continue the standard of holiness to all men, the believer's rule of duty. He came also to make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets. The covenant of grace is, for substance, the same now that it was then, and Christ the Mediator of it. He did not make void the ceremonial law, but manifested himself to be the substance of all those shadows.

Let none suppose that Christ allows his people to trifle with any of the commands of God's holy law. How impious to suppose that his obedience to death was to purchase men license to indulge ungodly lusts! No sinner partakes of Christ's justifying righteousness, till he condemns himself as a transgressor of the law of God, and repents of those his evil deeds. The goodness and mercy revealed in the gospel lead the believer to still deeper

self-aborrence. The law is the christian's rule of duty, and he delights therein.

Though the scribes and pharisees made many minute distinctions between great and small commandments, the whole law is enacted by the same Divine authority, and no part of it can be of small obligation. Opinions that tend to the destruction of serious godliness, by corrupt glosses on the scriptures, are bad when they are held, but worse when they are propagated and taught as the word of God. If a man, pretending to be Christ's disciple, encourage himself in any allowed disobedience to the holy law of God, or teach others to do the same, whatever his station or reputation among men, he can be no true disciple. Let us carefully remark how important is the right understanding of the spiritual meaning of the moral law, for the most opposite errors arise from ignorance of the law and mistakes concerning it. Licentiousness and self-righteousness are nearly allied; the self-justifier is a bitter enemy to its spiritual import, while the licentious professor rests in his notions, and hates the sanctifying grace of the gospel. But when every self-confident hope expires, and we plainly perceive, that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, then Christ, in the whole of his salvation, will become precious to our souls; we shall learn to understand and value the new covenant of mercy and grace, and the way of justification by faith alone. Christ's righteousness, imputed to us by faith alone, is requisite to every one that enters the kingdom of grace or of glory; but the new creation of the heart to holiness, produces an effect upon a man's temper and conduct which constitutes a righteousness of heart and life, far more excellent than that of any formalist.

17. Destroy; to abrogate or annul, to do away. 18. "Verily," in the original: "Amen"—A word derived from the Hebrew. When used at the beginning of a sentence it has the sense of, Verily; at the end it means, So be it.—*Blumfield*.

Jot is the letter Jod, (י) the smallest Hebrew letter, often used by the Jews to express a small precept of the law. The title was a slight mark at the corner or angle, distinguishing some letters from others which were very similar in form.—*Lamy. Grotius*.

36. Ver. 21—26. *The sixth commandment.*

Christ proceeds to expound the law in some particular instances; and to vindicate it from corrupt and partial glosses. The Jewish teachers had implied, that nothing except actual murder was forbid-

den, and this mainly for fear of the punishment to be inflicted by the magistrate. Thus they explained away the spiritual import of the command, and led the people to overlook the awful curse of God.

Christ gave an exposition of this commandment; according to which we must be judged hereafter, and therefore ought to be ruled now. The commandment is exceeding broad, and not to be limited by the will of men. Christ tells them that all rash anger is heart-murder. By our brother, here, we are to understand any person, though ever so much our inferior, for we are all made of one blood.

Applying opprobrious language to our brother is tongue-murder; when it proceeds from anger and malice within, it is the smoke of that fire which is kindled from hell. *Raca*, is a scornful word, and comes from pride; it is the language of that which Solomon calls proud wrath, Prov. 21. 24. Thou fool, is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred. It is, Thou wicked man, thou reprobate. Now this is a breach of the sixth commandment; malicious slanders and censures are poison that kills secretly and slowly.

Christ told them, that how light soever they made of these sins, they will certainly be reckoned for. He that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment and anger of God; he that calls him *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council, of being punished by the Sanhedrim for reviling an Israelite; but whosoever saith, Thou fool, thou profane person, thou child of hell, shall be in danger of hell fire, to which he condemns his brother; so *Whitby*. Some think it is in allusion to the penalties used in the courts of judgment among the Jews.

We ought, then, carefully to preserve christian love and peace with all our brethren; and if at any time a breach happens, we should labour for a reconciliation, by confessing our fault, humbling ourselves to our brother, begging his pardon, and making or offering satisfaction for wrong done in word or deed; and we should do this quickly; because, till this be done, we are utterly unfit for communion with God in holy ordinances.

When we are addressing ourselves to any religious exercises, it is good for us to take that occasion of serious reflection and self-examination. Envy, malice, and uncharitableness are so displeasing to God, that nothing can please him which

comes from a heart wherein they reign. Love or charity is so much better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice, that God will have reconciliation made with an offended brother before the gift is offered. Though we are unfit for communion with God, by a quarrel with a brother, yet that can be no excuse for the neglect of our duty: Leave there thy gift before the altar. One sin will never excuse another, but will rather double the guilt. Want of charity cannot justify the want of piety. The difficulty is easily got over: those who have wronged us, we must forgive; and those whom we have wronged, we must make satisfaction to, or at least tender it, so that if reconciliation be not made, it may not be our fault. Till this is done, we lie exposed to much danger. If the offence we have done exposes us to legal punishment, it is our wisdom and duty to prevent that by humble submission, and a just and peaceable satisfaction. A prison is an uncomfortable place to those who are brought to it by their own pride and prodigality, their own wilfulness and folly. And also upon a spiritual account, because while the quarrel continues, thou art unfit to come to the table of the Lord, so thou art unfit to die: if thou persist in this sin, there is danger lest thou be suddenly snatched away by the wrath of God, whose judgment thou canst not escape nor except against. Hell is a prison for all that live and die in malice and uncharitableness: out of that prison there is no rescue, no redemption.

This is very applicable to the great business of our reconciliation to God through Christ. The great God is an adversary to all sinners. It is our concern to agree with Him, to acquaint ourselves with Him, that we may be at peace, Job 22. 21; 2 Cor. 5. 20. While we are alive, we are in the way, in the way to his judgment-seat; after death, it will be too late; therefore give not sleep to thine eyes till it be done. Those who continue in a state of enmity to God, are continually exposed to his justice and his wrath. Christ is the Judge to whom impenitent sinners will be delivered; for all judgment is committed to the Son: he that was rejected as a Saviour, cannot be escaped as a Judge, Rev. 6. 16, 17. When we look to our conduct, the state of our hearts, the government of our passions, we shall see our need of forgiveness; we shall perceive our need of the powerful in-

fluences of the Holy Spirit; and shall learn to value the ordinances of God, as means through which they may be obtained. When we consider the importance of the case, and the uncertainty of life, we shall see that it is needful to seek peace with God without delay.

21. The scriptures and the explanations of the ancients, were read in the Jewish schools. The elders, the ancestors of the Jews since the time of Ezra, corrupted the law by their false glosses, when they recited parts of it to the people.—*Gill*. That commentator gives instances of these glosses or false interpretations.

22. The judgment alludes to the lesser courts of judicature, the council to the sanhedrim, and hell fire to Gehenna, or the perpetual fire in the valley of Hinnom, which was used figuratively to denote the place of the damned. Thus is shown the different degrees of guilt and of punishment incurred by unprovoked resentment, derision, or contempt, or loading with odious appellations, as inflicted by different tribunals. *Gill* states that the word "raca" was a term of reproach expressive of indignation and contempt. Fool does not signify one of weak parts, or ignorant, but a wicked, reprobate man. There is a manifest gradation from causeless anger, or reproachful words, to a censorious judging of a man's eternal state, which is here condemned. He notices declarations in the ancient Jewish writers very similar. *Middleton* considers, that to be in danger of the judgment, signifies the punishment of a future state. *Townsend* supposes the latter clause is used in a literal, not a metaphorical sense; he considers it denotes the different degrees of punishment, and that he who indulges himself in the greatest licence of abuse, will lose his friends, and at length sink to the loathsome office of those who attended the fires in the valley of Hinnom, where all the filth and offensive substances of the city were consumed, which must have been a most hateful, polluting, and degrading office to a Jew.

The word "moreh," translated fool, may rather be rendered wretch or miscreant. See *Campbell*, who considers that it was the original term used, and should be preserved as well as "raca" as the Oriental word, and not translated as a Greek word. These very terms are sometimes used by Christ and his apostles, but were rightly applied, and did not proceed from ill-will or rancour.

§ 36. Ver. 27—32. *The seventh commandment.*

The pharisees interpreted the seventh commandment only of gross outward actions, but Christ showed that it reached to the thoughts and desires of the heart. The subjection of the carnal inclinations, victory over the desires of the heart, must be attended with painful exertions, and often by the sacrifice of what has been held dear. But it must be done. Every thing is bestowed to save us from our sins, not in them. If we would be kept from gross iniquities, all our senses and faculties must be forbidden those things which lead to transgression, Job 31. 1. These precepts are hedges about the law of heart-purity, ver. 28. And those who dress

and deck and expose themselves, with design to be looked at and lusted after, break this commandment. Those wholead others into temptation to sin, or leave them in it, or expose them to it, make themselves guilty of their sin, and will be accountable for it. The flesh, with the affections and lusts, must be crucified, and every inclination governed according to the law of God, for the welfare of society, and the good of our own souls. But though the members of the body are the instruments of sin, it proceeds from the lusts of the heart; and if these be mortified, there will be no need to injure the body, and unless they are so, it would be of no use. If painful operations are submitted to, that our lives may be saved, what ought our minds to shrink from, when the salvation of our souls is concerned? Observe how Christ continually called attention to a future state, the resurrection of the body, and hell into which the wicked will be cast. There is tender mercy under all the Divine requirements, and the grace and consolations of the Spirit will enable us to attend to them. Christ came to magnify the moral law; he therefore restored things to their original state, and refers to the law respecting divorce, which the Jews had abused, in ver. 31, 32.

29. This is not to be understood literally, for no man is obliged to mutilate any part of his body to prevent sin, or on account of the commission of it. That is no where required, and if done would be sinful. But it is figurative, and the sense is, to turn the mind away from such objects.—*Gill*. He shows that the Jews used this way of speaking, and illustrates many expressions in our Lord's discourse by reference to passages in Jewish writers. *Porteus* observes, The eye to be plucked out is the eye of concupiscence, the hand to be cut off is the hand of wrath and of vengeance.

§ 36. Ver. 33—37. *The third commandment.*

The scribes explained the third commandment as only forbidding gross perjury, but Christ commanded his disciples not to swear at all. Examples in the New Testament prove that swearing on solemn and important occasions is not unlawful, 2 Cor. 1. 23; 1 Thess. 2. 5; and there is no reason to conclude that solemn oaths in a court of justice, or on other sufficient occasions, are wrong, provided they are taken with due reverence, and are exactly consistent with truth. But the multiplication of oaths, and an irreverent manner in administering them, is a very great evil. And all oaths taken without necessity, or in common conversation, must be sinful, as well as all those expressions

which imply an appeal to God, though persons think thereby to evade the guilt of swearing. The whole creation is the Lord's, therefore to swear by any part of it, implies an appeal to the great Creator and Judge. If conversation be intermingled with sacred names, though without meaning, it is profaneness. It should suffice a christian to affirm or to deny, with repetition if necessary, and they should so speak and act that their words may be deemed fully satisfactory. The worse men are, the less they are bound by oaths; the better they are, the less there is need for them.

The Jews used to characterise a man of strict probity and good faith by saying, His yes is yes, and his no is no; that is, You may depend upon his word. Our Lord does not enjoin the precise terms wherein we are to affirm or deny, but such an habitual regard to truth as would render oaths unnecessary.—(77.)

34. The Jews had many evasions and subterfuges in making solemn vows and oaths.

§ 36. Ver. 38—42. *The law of retaliation.*

Observe what the Old Testament permission was in case of injury. It was not a command, that every one should of necessity require such satisfaction; but they might lawfully insist on it, if they pleased. This we find, Exod. 21. 24; Lev. 24. 20; Deut. 19. 21. This is in force with us, as a rule to lawgivers, wisely to apportion punishments to crimes.

The scribes explained it as if it authorized private revenge, and required people to demand, or even themselves to inflict, severe retaliation. But Christ showed that the moral law, when properly explained, required the reverse of this vindictive spirit and conduct. His disciples are not allowed even to resist evil by violence or injuries. There is little need to enumerate exceptions and limitations to general rules. The preservation of life, liberty, or important duties to others, will authorize, and in some cases may require men to stand in their own defence, even at the peril of unlawful assailants; but it is evidently the duty of a christian and his wisdom to endure contempt, pain, and loss, which does not involve him in injustice to others, rather than to incur temptations and evils in seeking redress. The great and plain instruction is—Suffer any injury that can be borne, for the sake of peace, committing your interests and concerns to the Lord's keeping. The

complainant's duty is, to forgive the injury as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the public good.

The sum of all is, that christians must not be litigious and contentious. If the injury be such as requires us to seek reparation, it must be for a good end, and without thought of revenge; though we must not invite injuries, we must meet them cheerfully in the way of duty. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront—let them remember, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and those who act upon such principles will have most peace and comfort themselves. Thus would it be if all men were christians, and well understood and practised the religion of Jesus.

39. "Evil," or the evil person.—*A. Clarke.*

41. Probably reference is here made to the eastern usage, of persons in authority, when travelling, compelling others to lead their horses and carriages, and even their personal attendance.

§ 36. Ver. 43—48. *The law of love explained.*

We have here an exposition of that great precept of the second table, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law. This law was corrupted by the comments of the Jewish teachers. By neighbour they understood those only of their own country, nation, and religion; and those only whom they were pleased to look upon as their friends. Yet this was not the worst: from this command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, they were willing to infer what God never designed, Thou shalt hate thine enemy; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God by their traditions, though there were express laws to the contrary, *Exod. 23. 4, 5; Deut. 23. 7.* See how willing corrupt passions are to fetch countenance from the word of God.

The Lord Jesus teaches us another lesson: But I say unto you; I, who come to be the great Peace-maker, the general Reconciler, who loved you when you were strangers and enemies, I say, Love your enemies. Though men are ever so bad themselves, and base towards us, yet that does not discharge us from the great debt we owe them, of love to our kind. We cannot have complacency in one that is openly wicked and profane, nor put confidence in one that we know to be deceitful; but we must take notice, with pleasure, of what is amiable and

commendable, even in our enemies. We must have compassion for them, and good-will toward them. We are here told, that we must speak well of them. When we have said all the good we can of them, we must not be forward to say anything more. They, in whose tongues is the law of kindness, can give good words to those who give bad words to them.

We must do well to them. Be ready to do them all the real kindness we can, and glad of an opportunity to do it, and especially to their souls. We must pray for them. If we cannot otherwise testify our love to them, yet this way we may without ostentation, and it is a way we dare not dissemble in. The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men in rebellion against him, teach us to do good to those that hate us; especially considering, that though there is in us a carnal mind which is enmity to God, yet we share in his bounty.

To do good to them who do good to us, is common; even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give good proofs of it. In doing this we serve ourselves, and consult our own advantage. It is a serious question, which we should frequently put to ourselves, What do we more than others? We know more than others; we talk more of the things of God than others; we profess, and have promised more than others; God has done more for us, and therefore justly expects more from us than from others. We that owe so much, that owe our all to the Divine bounty, ought to copy it as well as we can. Wherein do we live above the children of this world? Are we not carnal, and as men do we not walk below the character of christians? In this especially we must do more than others, that while every one will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle than most men act by. Others salute their brethren, they embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion; but we must not so confine our respect.

Our Saviour concludes this subject with this exhortation, Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. It is the duty of christians to desire, and aim at, and press towards perfection in grace and holiness, *Phil. 3. 12—14.* And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, *1 Pet. 1. 15, 16.*

The concluding verses evidently prove,

that Christ's spiritual exposition of the law was not only intended to show the need of his righteousness and atonement for justification, but to teach his disciples the rule of their duty: all they come short of, or deviate from, is sin, and needs deep repentance, and continual forgiveness, through the redemption of his blood, and supplies of grace to enable to more exact obedience.

Surely more is to be expected from the followers of Christ than from others; surely more will be found in them than in others. Let us beg of God to enable us to prove ourselves his children, by copying his example of goodness and mercy. Let us be his followers as dear children, walking in love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself a sacrifice for our sins, making progress in his way, and daily exercising repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

47. "Publicans," tax gatherers. This class of men was detestable for their intolerable rapacity and avarice.—*A. Clarke*. "Wherein do ye excel?"—*Campbell*.

## CHAPTER VI.

§ 36. Ver. 1—4. *Against hypocrisy in almsgiving.*

Ver. 9—13. L. 11. 2—4.

The religion of the pharisees was as inconsistent with that of Christ, in its motives and principles, as in its rules and standard. Having vindicated the holy law from their perversions and superficial comments, our Lord next warned against hypocrisy and ostentation in religious duties.

The doctrine set forth in this chapter clearly aims at the raising of men's hearts to heaven. The end of the gospel and all preaching is, that men may learn in all their actions to regard God more, and man less; to be less earnest and careful for earth, and more for heaven. How high and how lasting a good is God's liking and approbation! How poor and vanishing is man's good opinion!—(83.)

What we do must be done from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men. In these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. It is a subtle sin; vainglory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. But the giving of alms is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its

being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. It has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy.

Christ takes it for granted that his disciples will be disposed to liberality, according to their ability; and every good work done from proper motives will be rewarded by our God. This therefore is not inconsistent with the doctrine of free grace, and justification by faith alone, as taught by him.

What was the practice of the hypocrites about this duty? They did it not from obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vainglory, for ostentation. The doom Christ passes upon them is very observable. At first view this may seem a promise, but two words in it make it a threatening. It is *their* reward; not the reward which God promises to those who do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men. They have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter.

Whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, let not thy left hand know it: conceal it as much as possible; keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, not because it will get thee a good name.

We must go further, and conceal these kindnesses as far as possible from ourselves, by not thinking of, or eyeing them with complacency. They are given to God, and should be hidden in him.—(11.)

Self-conceit and self-complacency are as dangerous as vainglory and ostentation. No part of our duty is more liable to be made an occasion for ambition and vainglory: many designs, very useful to others, are supported by liberality that entirely proceeds from such principles. The heart is indeed deceitful.

Let thine alms be in secret, and then thy Father which seeth in secret will observe them. When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. He will reward thee as thy Father; not as a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a Father who gives abundantly to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee openly; if not in the present day, yet in the great day.

2. A metaphorical expression reproving the ostentation of the pharisees.

§ 36. Ver. 5—8. *Against hypocrisy in prayer.*

It is taken for granted that all the disciples of Christ pray. As soon as Paul

was converted, Behold, he prayeth ! You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living christian that does not pray. For this shall every one that is godly pray. If prayerless, then graceless. Now, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as they do. By the hypocrites here are meant especially the scribes and pharisees. There were two great faults they were guilty of in prayer, against each of which we are here cautioned—vain glory, and vain repetitions.

Verify they have their reward ; they have all the recompense they must ever expect from God for their service, and a poor recompense it is. But if in so great a transaction as is between us and God, when we are at prayer, we can take in so poor a consideration as the praise of men, it is just that it should be all our reward. Christ always used the word “verily” to confirm matters of great importance. It is a strong affirmation.

Humility and sincerity are the two great lessons Christ teaches us. Personal prayer is here supposed to be the duty and practice of all Christ's disciples. No place is amiss, if it do but answer the end. Secret prayer is to be performed in retirement ; yet if the circumstances be such that we cannot avoid being taken notice of, we must not therefore neglect the duty. Pray to him as a Father, as thy Father, ready to hear and answer, graciously inclined to pity, help, and succour thee. Pray to thy Father which is in secret. God is present in all places ; he is especially nigh to thee in what thou callest upon him for.

There is not a secret, sudden breathing after God, but he observes it. He will reward thee openly. It is called a reward, but it is of grace, not of debt ; what merit can there be in begging ? Sometimes secret prayers are rewarded openly in this world, by signal answers to them ; however, at the great day there will be an open reward. We must not use vain repetitions in prayer. The fault here reprobated and condemned, is making a mere lip-labour of the duty of prayer, the service of the tongue, when it is not the service of the soul. It is not all repetition in prayer that is here condemned, but vain repetitions. Christ himself prayed, saying the same words, ch. 26. 44, from more than ordinary fervour and zeal, Luke 22. 44. So Daniel, ch. 9. 19. Also

much speaking, and prayer lengthened, either out of pride or superstition, is condemned. Not that all long prayers are forbidden ; Christ prayed all night, Luke 6. 12 ; but merely to prolong the prayer, as if that would make it more pleasing or more prevailing with God, is here condemned. It is not much praying that is condemned, but much speaking ; we are bid to pray always.

This is the way of the heathen, and it ill becomes christians so to worship. It need not be your way, for your Father in heaven knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him. It does not follow that therefore you need not pray ; for God requires you by prayer to own your need of him, and dependence on him, and to plead his promises ; but you are to pour out your hearts before him, and then leave it with him. Consider, the God we pray to is our Father by creation, by covenant. Let us come to him with the disposition of children, with love, reverence, and dependence ; and then those need not say many words, who are taught by the Spirit of adoption to pray aright. If he do not give his people what they ask, it is because he knows they do not need it, and that it is not for their good. So far is God from being wrought upon by the length or language of our prayers, that the most powerful intercessions are those which are made with groanings that cannot be uttered, Rom. 8. 26. Let us well study what is shown of the frame of mind in which our prayers and supplications should be offered, and learn daily from Christ how to pray.

{ 36. Ver. 9—15. *How to pray.*

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs how to do better ; for his are reproofs of instruction. Christ saw it needful to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form. Not that we are tied up to the use of this only, or of this always ; yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages. And it is our Lord's prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing. Nor can we offer one petition for ourselves or for others, that is warranted by the word of God, but it is in fact comprised in these few sentences. It has much in a little ; and it is used acceptably no further than

it is used with understanding, and without vain repetition.

There are three parts of the prayer. The preface is, Our Father which art in heaven. We must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others. We are to pray to God only: not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, and cannot give the favours we expect. We are to address ourselves to God.

As the Creator of all men, God may, in a general sense, be called the Father of all: but it is in a higher and more endearing sense that he is here called a Father, as being reconciled to believing, repenting sinners through the blood of Christ. God is angry with the wicked every day. He does not look down upon them with approbation, nor do they look up to him with confidence and love. Therefore this prayer is not fit for the use of a man who lives in sin; whose carnal mind is enmity against God. How dares the swearer, the liar, the drunkard, call God a Father? God will not own the relation. But when a person is convinced of his state as a sinner, when he is enlightened to know Christ as a Saviour, and when by a lively faith he comes to God through Christ, then God is reconciled to him, his anger is turned away, and he comforts him. Then he may look up to God as a merciful God, "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" for, "as as many as receive Christ," and the atonement through him, "he giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;" and to such only doth he give "the Spirit of adoption," whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." For it is one thing to use the word Father, and another to approach him, as an affectionate child comes to a tender parent, with a persuasion of his being able and willing to supply every want. To such persons this name is full of comfort: for they are emboldened to believe, that if earthly parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, God, our heavenly Father, is much more disposed to do them good, and to bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.—(7.)

● As our Father in heaven. It is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, Heb. 8. 1. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness; but a Father

in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence, Eccl. 5. 2.

The petitions are six; the three first relate more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual. This prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that other things shall be added.

1. Hallowed be thy name. It is the same word that in other places is translated sanctified. We must begin our prayers with praising God; we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified, both by us and others.

2. Thy kingdom come. What God has promised we must pray for; his promises are given to quicken and encourage prayer. Let the gospel be preached to all, and embraced by all; let all be brought to embrace Christ as their Saviour and Sovereign. It is a prayer that all infidelity, impiety, superstition, ignorance, and false religion, may be banished from the earth, and that God would make himself known unto all nations, in his glory and in his grace.

3. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. Having prayed that Christ may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine, 1 Sam. 3. 18. I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed. In this sense Christ prayed, Not my will, but thine be done. Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me the grace necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men, 1 Pet. 4. 2, much less Satan's will, John 8. 44. That it may be done on earth, in this place of our trial and probation, where our work must be done, as it is done in heaven, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like to heaven by the observance of God's will, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, is



become so near to hell. What an extensive petition is this!

4. Give us this day our daily bread. After the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary supports and comforts of this present life. Bread for the day approaching, for all the remainder of our lives. Bread for the time to come, or bread for our being and subsistence, that which is agreeable to our condition in the world, Prov. 30. 8; food convenient for us and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word here has a lesson in it. We ask for *bread*; that teaches us sobriety and temperance: we ask for bread, not superfluities. We ask for *our* bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread of others, not the bread of deceit, Prov. 20. 17, not the bread of idleness, Prov. 31. 27, but the bread honestly gotten. We ask for our *daily* bread; which teaches us constantly to depend upon Divine providence. We beg of God to *give* it us, not sell it us, nor lend it us, but give it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread. We pray, Give it to *us*. This teaches us a compassionate concern for the poor. It intimates also that we ought to pray with our families. We pray that God would give it us *this day*; which teaches us to renew the desires of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed. As the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

The christian will ask for bread for his soul, as well as his body. Christ is to the believer's soul what food is to the body. He is the Bread of life; and if we are born of God, we shall daily desire to feed upon Him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving.—(7.)

5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. This is connected with the former; intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. It intimates likewise, that we must pray for daily pardon, as duly as we pray for daily bread.

Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator. We run in debt continually. We receive our being and all we possess from God, to whom they all ought to be devoted in perfect love. By failure in this we contract a debt we cannot

pay, but which needs continual remission. Our heart's desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would forgive us our debts; that we may not come into condemnation; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. The great plea we have to rely upon, is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Surety. True repentance and faith always produce a disposition to forgive others; malice and revenge are proofs of impenitence.

As we forgive our debtors. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Those who come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them. As to debts of money, we must not be severe to those that cannot pay; but this means debts of injury. We must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us. If there be in us this gracious disposition, it is wrought of God, and therefore it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us.

6. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, we pray, as is fit, that we may never return again to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but, Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us. Do not leave us to ourselves, Ps. 19. 13, for we are very weak. Temptations are to be prayed against, because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that then follow. Thus we are taught to hate and dread sin while we hope for mercy, to distrust ourselves, to rely on the providence and grace of God to keep us from it, to be prepared to resist the tempter, and not to become tempters of others. We often receive much hurt by overlooking the need for this request.

But deliver us from evil, "from the evil one," the devil, the tempter; keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or may not be overcome by those assaults: or from the evil thing, sin, the worst of evils; that evil thing which God hates, which Satan tempts men to, and destroys them by. Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the evil of every condition in the world; from the evil of death, from the sting of death,

which is sin: deliver us from ourselves, from our own evil hearts: deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them: that we may be completely delivered from them, and obtain eternal life and happiness by the mercy which is in Christ Jesus.

The conclusion is, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God himself. Thine is the kingdom; thou hast the government of the world, and dost protect the saints, thy willing subjects in it. Thine is the power to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people. Thine is the glory, as the end of all that which is given to the saints, and done for them, in answer to their prayers. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

It is also a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share. Ascribing glory to God for ever, intimates an acknowledgment that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it with angels and saints above, Ps. 71. 14.

Amen, refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the whole in one word. It is good to conclude religious duties with warmth and vigour, that we may go from them with a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of christians to say, Amen, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs, 1 Cor. 14. 16, and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward impressions answerable to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

The force of the whole prayer lies in the first and last words of it—Our Father, and Amen. In the first we apply to God in Christ, as reconciled to us; in the last we set our seal to the whole, when we say, Amen; so let it be; so, we humbly hope, it shall be.—(7.)

Most of the petitions in the Lord's prayer had been used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect; but that clause in the fifth petition, As we forgive our debtors, was new, and therefore our Saviour shows ver. 14, 15,

that he added it from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those who have injured us; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must bind ourselves to it.

Here is a promise, If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. He that relents toward his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called debts, are here called trespasses. We must forgive as we hope to be forgiven.

Those who desire to find mercy with God, must show mercy to their brethren. If we pray in anger, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. Christ came into the world as the great Peacemaker, not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another. It is great presumption, and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of what Christ here lays such a stress upon. Man's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

11. The words translated "daily bread," have occasioned considerable difficulty to the critical interpreters of scripture; but the most general and best-supported opinion, both of ancient and modern commentators, appears to be, that they mean "food sufficient for our support."

12. The substance of the Lord's prayer, with the exception of the words, "As we forgive our debtors," is found in the nineteen prayers of the Jewish liturgy.

13. "Abandon us not to temptation."—*Campbell*. The doxology does not occur in St. Luke; but if, as *Whitby* and *Lightfoot* have conjectured, the prayer was taught at two different times, it may have been omitted on one occasion.

§ 36. Ver. 16—18. *Respecting fasting.*

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving and in prayer. Religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when God in his providence calls to it, and the case of their own souls requires it. But it is not so much a duty itself, as means to dispose us for other duties. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, commonly used among the pious Jews. It was not the pharisee's fasting twice in the week, but his boasting of it, that Christ condemned, Luke 18. 12. It is a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament that it is so generally neglected among christians. The primitive christians often fasted: see Acts 13. 3; 14. 23. Private fasting is supposed, 1 Cor. 7. 5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh,

and humiliation under the hand of God. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fulness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was in fastings often, and so he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection. Christ's disciple was to avoid all ostentation. His fast was to be private. In his family, or when from home, he was to be cheerful, and attired as at other times.

The pharisees proclaimed their fasting, and managed so that all who saw them might notice it. Here also they have their reward, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; they have it, and it is their all.

Fasting is the humbling of the soul, Ps. 35. 13, that is the inside of the duty; let that, therefore, be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. We shall find that God did see in secret, and will reward openly.

16, 17. Besides the public fasts, the pharisees observed many private ones; and to show that they were thus engaged, they used to appear abroad with sad or gloomy countenances, even colouring them that they might look more dismal, and with their dress and persons sordid and neglected. The Jews usually anointed and washed themselves daily, not only on festivals.

§ 36. Ver. 19—24. *Evil of being worldly-minded.*

Worldly-mindedness is a common and fatal symptom of hypocrisy, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul, under the cloak of a profession of religion. Something or other every man has which he makes his treasure, which his heart is upon. It is that good, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with emphasis, Eccl. 2. 3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has pleasure and confidence in above other things. Christ directs us in the right choice.

We must not lay up our treasures on earth. We must not count these things to be the best things, nor the most valuable, nor the most serviceable. We must not covet abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at adding to them, as men do to their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough. We must not confide in them for futurity. We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire. These things must not be made our consolation, Luke 6. 24, our good things, Luke 16. 25. Let us consider we are laying up, not for our posterity in this world, but for ourselves

in the other world. It concerns thee to choose wisely, thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou chooseth.

That which is treasure upon earth, moth and rust do corrupt. Worldly riches have in themselves a principle of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves, and make themselves wings. Thieves break through and steal. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where the treasure is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. It is folly to make that our treasure which we may easily be robbed of.

Christ counsels to make the joys and glories of the other world, those things not seen that are eternal, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. There are treasures in heaven, as sure as there are on this earth, which those that are truly sanctified arrive at. It is our wisdom to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below as not worthy to be compared with it, and to be content with nothing short of it. If we thus make those treasures ours, they are laid up, and we may trust God to keep them safe for us; thither let us then refer all our designs, and extend all our desires. There it is safe; it will not decay, nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, an inheritance incorruptible.

Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will your heart be. That way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view.

This direction about laying up our treasure, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution of not doing any thing in religion to be seen of men. If we have done these only to gain applause of men, we have laid up this treasure on earth, have lodged it in the hands of men. The praise of men we covet so much, is liable to corruption. Slander and calumny are thieves that break through and steal it away. Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven, Isa. 58. 3. But acceptance with God is treasure in heaven, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen.

These truths are enforced by a comparison. The actions of the whole body are directed according to the light re-

ceived by the eye. If that is single or clear, it perceives things as they really are; the whole body has light, and will move with safety. But if the eye be evil, if it see things confusedly, and not as they are, the man will be liable to lose his way, or run into danger. Thus an enlightened mind will enable a man to make a wise choice, and to conduct himself aright. But a darkened mind leads to a wrong choice; then the more earnest a man is, the more he is in error. If, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of seeking the things of Christ, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but confusion and every evil work in the superstructure. The worldly man is wrong in his first principle; therefore all his reasonings and actions therefrom must be wrong. It is equally to be applied to false religion; that which is deemed light is thick darkness. This is an awful, but a common case; carefully then should we examine our leading principles by the word of God, with earnest prayer for the teaching of his Spirit.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon is a Syriac word, that signifies gain; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be gain, Phil. 3. 7, is mammon. To some, their appetite is their mammon, and they serve that, Phil. 3. 19; to others their ease, their sleep, their sports and pastimes, are their mammon, Prov. 6. 9; to others worldly riches, Jam. 4. 13; to others honours and perfections. The praise and applause of men was the pharisees' mammon; in a word, self—sensual, worldly self, is the mammon which cannot be served in conjunction with God; for if it be served, it is in competition with him, and in contradiction to him. Christ does not say, We must not, or we should not, but we *cannot* serve God and mammon; we cannot love both, 1 John 2. 15; Jam. 4. 4. Let us then choose this day whom we will serve, and abide by our choice.

A man may do some service to two masters, but he can devote himself to the service of no more than one. God requires the whole heart, and will not share it with the world. When two masters

are opposed to each other, the impossibility of serving both is very plain. He who holds to the world and loves it, must despise God; he who loves God, must renounce the friendship of the world.

19. The word "treasures" applies to other possessions besides money. In ancient times a large number of garments, many of which were very splendid, formed a considerable part of the wealth of opulent persons. They often amounted to many thousand changes of raiment. See also Job 27. 16; James 5. 1—3.

§ 36. Ver. 25—34. *Trust in God commended.*

There is scarcely any sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of this life. This often ensnares the poor as much as the love of wealth does the rich. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a carefulness about temporal things which is a duty. We must, however, be careful not to carry these lawful cares too far.

The care here forbidden is a disquieting, tormenting care, which hurries the mind, which disturbs our joy in God, and hinders enjoyment of what God has given us. Also distrustful, unbelieving thoughts. God has promised to provide for those that are his, all things needful for life as well as godliness. He never said, They shall be feasted, but, Verily they shall be fed. Inordinate care for time to come, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence. As to present sustenance, we must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God; be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for daily bread; but for the future, we must cast our care upon God, and take no thought. It looks like jealousy of God, who knows how to give what we want when we know not how to get it. Let our souls dwell at ease in him! Ps. 127. 2.

Take no thought for your life. All that a man has will he give for his life—yet take no thought about it. Not about the continuance of it; refer it to God to lengthen or shorten it as he pleases; our times are in his hand, and they are in a good hand. Not about the comforts of this life; refer it to God to imberber or sweeten it as he pleases. Food and raiment God

has promised, therefore we may confidently expect them.

Take no thought for the morrow, for the time to come. Be not anxious for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not boast of to-morrow, so we must not care for to-morrow, or the events of it.

One would think the command of Christ was enough to restrain us from disquieting, distrustful care, independently of the comfort of our own souls, which is so nearly concealed; but to free us from anxious thoughts, and to expel them, Christ here suggests comforting thoughts.

God has given us life, and given us the body. What can he not do for us, who did that? what will he not? If we take care about our souls and for eternity, which are more than the body and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against the evils we are exposed to, will supply us with the things we are in need of.

Look upon the fowls of the air, and learn to trust God for food; disquiet not yourselves with thoughts what you shall eat. They are fed, we know not how, and it is your heavenly Father that feeds them. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without care or projects of their own.

Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. The heirs of heaven are much better than the fowls of heaven; and, by faith, they soar higher. God is their Maker and Lord, their Owner and Master; but beside all this, he is your Father, and in his account ye are of more value than many sparrows. You are his children; now He that feeds his birds, surely will not starve his babes. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they sing among the branches, Ps. 104. 12, and, to the best of their power, praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; worldly care damps our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

Look upon the lilies, and learn to trust God for raiment. So much concerned are many for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for daily bread. To ease us of this care, let us consider the lilies of the field. There is a great deal of good to be learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it, Prov. 6. 6; 24. 32.

1. Consider how frail the lilies are; they are the grass of the field. Thus all flesh is grass; though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; as the grass of the field in nature and constitution.

2. Consider how free from care the lilies are. It does not follow that we must therefore neglect, or do carelessly the proper business of this life; suitable attention to it is the praise of the virtuous woman, Prov. 31. Idleness tempts God, instead of trusting him; but he that provides for the inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to toil and spin, God can furnish what is necessary.

3. Consider how fair, how fine the lilies are, and what they grow from. The root is lost and buried under ground in the winter, yet, when spring returns, it appears; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they shall grow as the lily, Hos. 14. 5. Out of that obscurity, in a few weeks, they come to be such, that though the array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent, yet he came far short of the beauty of the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. God is here said thus to clothe the grass of the field. All the excellences of the creature flow from God, the fountain and spring of them.

4. Consider how instructive all this is to us. As to fine clothing; this teaches us not to covet it, not to be proud of it, not to make the putting on of apparel our adorning, for after all our care in this, the lilies will far outdo us. But their adorning will soon perish, and so will ours. As to necessary clothing, trust him that clothes the lilies. Observe the title Christ gives them, "O ye of little faith." This may be taken as an encouragement to true faith, though it be but weak. The babes in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those grown up, and with a special care and

tenderness; though poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on them. It intimates what is at the bottom of our inordinate care; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us.

Which of you, the wisest, the strongest of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? ver. 27. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not He who reared us to this, provide for us now we are reared? We cannot alter the stature we are of, if we would. Now, as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate. We must reconcile ourselves to it, as we do to our stature. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce and accommodate ourselves to them.

Thoughtfulness about the world is a heathenish sin, and unbecoming christians. The Gentiles seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are without God in the world, and understand not his providence; but it is shame for christians, who build upon nobler principles, to do so.

The life of the soul, eternal happiness, is the one thing needful, about which we should employ our thoughts, and which is commonly neglected, in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendancy. Thoughtfulness for our souls, is the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world. Seek first the kingdom of God, and make religion your business; say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world.

The great duty required, is the sum and substance of our whole duty. Seek first the kingdom of God; mind religion as your principal concern. We are to seek the blessings Christ has to bestow, by repentance, by faith, and in the use of every means of grace, as our first object; desiring to be more conformed to the law and example of our righteous King. Our bountiful Father will add to us all things that pertain to our present life, without our anxious carefulness. But those who reverse this order go the way to ruin themselves, both with respect to this world and that which is to come. The next day may never arrive to us; if it does, God will send its supports and supplies with it.

Surely this is a merciful appointment of our heavenly Father. He knows that every day brings more trials and sufferings than we can well bear; he therefore

allows—he even commands us, to cast all our care for the future upon him. If we will load ourselves with a heavy burden, which he does not lay upon us, we torment ourselves, and dishonour God by our folly and unbelief. And let us not pull that upon ourselves all together, which He has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels.

The conclusion of this whole matter is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by apprehensions of troubles, than God has made it, by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them. and then let none of these things move us.

Our lives are more than meat, and our bodies than raiment, what then are our souls which the Saviour has redeemed with his precious blood? While adorned with the robes of his righteousness and salvation, we cannot doubt his truth and love. How unreasonable then, and how shameful is our unbelief! We need his merciful rebuke, and to pray to him continually to increase our faith. Then all these rules and precepts of our gracious Lord will be known by experience, to conduce to our present comfort as well as to our future benefit.

Why has every day some evil attending it? Because we are sinners, and to correct and bring us back to God. Happy are those who take the Lord for their God, and make full proof of it by trusting his providential care, and resigning themselves wholly to his wise disposal. Let thy Spirit convince us of our sin in the want of this disposition, teach us an acceptable righteousness, and purge out the worldliness of our hearts, that under a deep sense of thy purity, we may do all our works as unto thee who seest in secret, and wilt reward us openly, not for our imperfect and polluted services, but for the alone merits of Jesus Christ.—(71.)

27. Many consider that the continuance of life is here meant, rather than the increase of height. The word translated stature, rather signifies age, or time of life.

28. In autumn, the fields in many parts of the east, are overrun with plants of the *amaryllis lutea*, whose golden lilaceous flowers present one of the most glorious objects in nature. Various kinds of lilies, the *martagon*, crown imperial, &c., abound in those countries, and have been noticed by many travellers.

30. In the east, fuel is scarce, and the withered herbage of all sorts is used for that purpose. The term here translated grass, includes all kinds of vegetable productions not classed as trees.

## CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—29.

L. 6. 37—49.

§ 36. Ver. 1—6. *Christ reproves rash judgment.*

We must judge ourselves, and judge of our own acts, but not make our word a law to every body. We must not judge our brother; that is, we must not speak evil of him; so it is explained, Jam. 4. 11. We must not despise him, nor set him at nought, Rom. 14. 10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass judgment upon our brother without any ground. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer invidious things from their words and actions. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act; nor of what he is in himself, by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are partial. We are to put the best construction on doubtful actions, and never to ascribe good ones to bad motives without full proof. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, it is God's prerogative to try the heart, nor must we judge of their eternal state.

If we judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. Commonly none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, against every man, shall, like him, have every man's hand and tongue against him, Gen. 16. 12. And they shall be judged of God, Jam. 3. 1.

Christ did not here forbid his disciples to form a judgment of men's state and character according to their avowed principles and conduct, for he directs us to judge by this rule, ch. 5. 15—20, and many of our duties require us so to do. But we ought not to be officious, rash, or severe, in forming a judgment; or hasty in declaring it.

What would become of us, if God should be as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging our brethren! We may justly expect it, if we are extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return on their own heads.

Here is a just reproof to the censorious, who quarrel with their brethren for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones. Some sins are comparatively

as moles, while others are as beams; some as a gnat, others as a camel: but not that there is any sin little; if it be a mote, or splinter, it is in the eye; if a gnat, it is in the throat; both painful and perilous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out. That which charity teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own. There are many who are under the guilt and dominion of great sins, and yet justify themselves, as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the God of this world blinds their minds.

Here is a good rule for reprovers. Go in the right method, first cast the beam out of thine own eye. I must first reform myself, that I may help to reform my brother, and qualify myself to reprove him.

As every man is not to be a reprovor, so every offender is not the proper subject of reproof. Those here spoken of as dogs and swine, may be considered as hardened scorers, licentious or covetous professors, fierce and cruel opposers, or open apostates. Many truths and experiences, both by way of warning and instruction, which are excellent, and very precious to the humble and teachable, are not proper or suitable for such; they will only lead them to greater lengths in blasphemy and wickedness. Reproofs of instruction are ill-bestowed upon them, and expose the reprovor to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that the one will trample the reproofs under their feet, in scorn of them; and the other turn again and rend the reprovers. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as such, and only do it upon full evidence.

§ 36. Ver. 7—11. *Encouragements to prayer.*

Our Saviour had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given. Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. Ask as a beggar asks alms. Ask; represent your wants and burdens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his pro-

mise. Ask, as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to inquire of God, Ezek. 36. 37. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost; or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door. We would be admitted to converse with God, would be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom. Sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer we knock: Lord, Lord, open to us. We must not only ask, but seek in the use of the appointed means; seek for that which we ask for, else we tempt God. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; he gives power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it. We must not only ask, but knock; must ask importunately; plead and wrestle with God; seek diligently, continue knocking; persevere in prayer, and in use of means.

Here are promises annexed: our labour in prayer shall not be in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; not lent you, not sold you, but given you. Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? Ye have not, because ye ask not, or ask not aright. Seek, and ye shall find. God is himself found of those that seek him, and if we find him, we have enough. Knock and it shall be opened; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. If the door be not opened at first, continue instant in prayer, ver. 8. This is made to extend to all that pray aright; every one that asketh receiveth, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith. Every one that asketh, not only shall receive, but does receive. By faith applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised. So sure are the promises of God, that they give present possession. Christ hereby puts his assent to the petition, he having all power, that is enough.

It is illustrated by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their readiness to give their children what they ask. Now this is of use to direct our prayers and expectations. We must come to God, as children to a Father in heaven, with reve-

rence and confidence. How naturally does the child, when in want or distress, run to the father with its complaints! We must come to him for good things, for those he gives to them that ask him; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him. We know not what is good for ourselves, Eccl. 6. 12, but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him; Father, thy will be done. We often ask that of God which would do us hurt, if we had it; he knows it, and therefore does not give it to us. Denials in love are better than grants in anger: we had been undone ere this, if we had obtained all we desired.

It should also encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed. We have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. God has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children. From the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve our children, we may be encouraged to apply ourselves to him for relief. What love and tenderness fathers have, are from him; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. It is argued "much more," and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are; his thoughts are above theirs, for they are evil, originally so. Parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into one, yet compared with the tender mercies of our God, they would be but as a drop to the ocean.

Christ says not he gives "*to his children*," lest the supplicant should be hindered by fear that he was not one, but "*to them that ask him*," that the very act of asking might give assurance of being heard. Let us never suppose our heavenly Father would bid us pray, incline our hearts to do so, and then refuse to hear, or give us what would be hurtful, instead of the bread of life and blessings of salvation.

§ 36. Ver. 12—14. *The broad and narrow way.*

Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do; not only toward God, but toward men; not only towards those of our party and persuasion, but toward men in general, all with whom we have to do,



The meaning of the rule lies in three things. 1. We must do that to our neighbour which we ourselves acknowledge to be fit and reasonable. 2. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as others, and they as much entitled to the benefit of it as we. 3. We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and act accordingly.

It is the summary of the second of the two great commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets, ch. 22. 40. Both the Old Testament and the New agree in prescribing to us to do as we would be done by.

Observe, from ver. 13, 14, there are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven and the way to hell—in the one of which all are walking: there is no middle place hereafter, no middle way now. All the children of men are saints or sinners, godly or ungodly.

See concerning the way of sin and sinners what allures. You will have abundance of liberty in that way; the gate is wide and stands open. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions; you may walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes. It is a broad way, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways; many contrary to each other, but all paths in this broad way. In this way men walk without trouble, contrivance, or even intending it. While they are pleasing or forgetting themselves, they are going on therein, even when sleeping or loitering. There is abundance of company in that way. If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil; if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to do as the most do; but is it not too great a sacrifice to be willing to be damned for company? and to go to hell with others, because they will not go to heaven with us? If many perish, we should be more cautious.

That which should affright us all from it, is, that it leads to destruction. Whether it be the high-way of open profaneness, or the back-way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

Here is an account given us of the way of holiness. Let us sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us that the gate is strait. Con-

version and regeneration are the gate to enter this way, out of a state of sin into a state of grace. This is a strait gate, hard to find, and hard to get through. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; much opposition must be struggled with and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. High thoughts must be brought down; we must deny ourselves, we must be willing to forsake all for an interest in Christ. The gate is strait to all, but to some straiter than to others; it is to the rich, or to those that have been long prejudiced against religion. The gate is strait; but blessed be God, it is not yet shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, ch. 25. 10.

The way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we are got through the strait gate; no, we must travel a narrow way, hedged in by the Divine law. Self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a right eye and a right hand. Daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must watch in all things, and walk with care; we must go through much tribulation. It is an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; but, blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it opens, and grows more and more pleasant.

The gate being so strait, and the way so narrow, it is not strange, that there are but few that find it and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those who are going to heaven are but few, compared to those who are going to hell. This discourages many, they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but say rather, If so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

And this way should invite us all; it leads to life: to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences

of the road. One hour in heaven will make amends for all troubles here.

This plain declaration of Christ has been disregarded by many who have taken pains to explain it away; but in all ages the real disciple of Christ has been regarded as a singular, unfashionable character; and all that have sided with the majority have gone on in the broad road to destruction. If we would serve God, we must be resolute in our religion.

Enter ye in at the strait gate. The matter is fairly stated; life and death, good and evil, are set before us, both the ways, and both the ends. Now let the matter be considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in. Delay not therefore; but enter ye in at the strait gate; knock at it by sincere and constant prayers, and a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without Divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible.

Can we often hear of the strait gate, and the narrow way, and how few there be that find it, without being in pain for ourselves, or ever once considering what the strait gate is, whether we are entered on the narrow way, and what progress we are making in it?—(71.)

14. Or, How narrow is the gate!—*Campbell*. The way to happiness is represented by Cebes, an ancient moralist under the same metaphor. Many such coincidences between the inspired and heathen writers have been observed by commentators, and dwelt upon to an extent which is injurious rather than advantageous. It only appears necessary thus to notice the subject, and to observe, that there can be no doubt that many maxims and precepts of the European and eastern moralists, were derived from the scriptures, by means of the intercourse they had with the Jews and the land of Judea, both during the captivity, and in later times.

§ 36. Ver. 15—20. *Against false prophets.*

False prophets were the most dangerous enemies to true religion among the Jews; and false teachers have been the same, in all ages and places where christianity is professed. Nothing so much prevents men from entering the strait gate, and becoming true followers of Christ, as the carnal, soothing, flattering doctrines of those who oppose the truth. These come with great appearance of holiness, but inwardly they are fierce and greedy. They may be known by the tendency and effects of their doctrines.\* Some part of their

temper and conduct is contrary to the mind of Christ. The conduct and example of a godly man must be good, and its effects beneficial; those of an unconverted man must be bad, and the effects evil.

When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. They come in sheep's clothing, in the habit of prophets, which was plain, and coarse, or unwrought skins; they wear a rough garment to deceive, Zech. 13. 4. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them.

Though there be fruit, if it be not good fruit, the tree is accounted barren; it certainly shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire. Doctrines of doubtful disputation must be tried by graces and duties of confessed certainty: those opinions come not from God that lead to sin: but if we cannot know them by their fruits, we must have recourse to the great touchstone, to the law and to the testimony: Do they speak according to that rule?

§ 36. Ver. 21—29. *To be doers of the word, not hearers only.*

Christ here shows that it will not suffice to own him for our Master only in word and tongue. There may be a seeming importunity in prayer; but if inward impressions be not answerable to outward expressions, we are but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. This is not to take us off from being earnest in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the form of godliness, without the power. It is necessary to our happiness that we do the will of Christ, which is indeed the will of his Father in heaven. Now this is the Father's will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. This is his will, even our sanctification.

The hypocrite offers other things in lieu of obedience, ver. 22. There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith, none of that faith which works by love and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is only real holiness and sanctification that is accepted of God. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles; but working miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not

carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion; as if this would atone for pride, worldliness, and sensuality, and want of love to God and man. Let us take heed of resting in outward privileges and performances, lest we deceive ourselves, and perish eternally, as multitudes do, with a lie in our right hand.

Those that go no further in Christ's service than bare profession, he will not own in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! This should be an awakening word to all christians. A profession of religion will not bear out any man in the practice and indulgence of sin: therefore, let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.

Christ is still speaking from heaven by his word and Spirit; he speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts new as then. To do Christ's sayings, is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenour of our lives, must be conformable to the gospel of Christ.

There are others whose religion rests in bare hearing, and goes no further; their heads are filled with empty notions, but they neither can stir, nor care to stir in any good duty. These two sorts of hearers are here represented under the comparison of two builders; one was wise, and built upon a rock, his building stood in a storm; the other foolish, and built upon the sand, and his building fell.

The general scope of this parable teaches us, to hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus; some of them seem hard to flesh and blood, but they must be done: thus we lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come. 1 Tim. 6. 19.

1. We have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, to make our calling and election sure, and so we make our salvation sure. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to inquire, what they shall do to be saved.

2. There is a rock provided for us to build this house upon, and that rock is

Christ. He is laid for a foundation, and other foundation can no man lay, Isa. 28. 16; 1 Cor. 3. 11. He is our hope, 1 Tim. 1. 1. We must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fulness of Christ's merit for the pardon of sin; the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature; and the prevalence of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as he is made known to us in the gospel, which is sufficient to answer all the necessities of our case: he is a Saviour to the uttermost. The church is built upon this Rock, and so is every believer. He is strong and immoveable as a rock; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made ashamed of our hope.

3. There is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the sayings of Christ, build their hopes upon this Rock; and it is their wisdom. Those build upon Christ, who, having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance and acceptance, counting every thing loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.

4. There are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this Rock, and build their hopes upon the sand; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if that were a sure token of God's favour, Hos. 12. 8. Others upon their outward profession of religion, and the reputation they have got by it. Upon this, with a great deal of assurance, they venture; but it is all sand, too weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

5. There is a storm coming that will try every man's work, 1 Cor. 3. 13; will discover the foundation, Hab. 3. 13. The trial is sometimes in this world; when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes; and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting enjoyment.

6. Those hopes which are built upon Christ, the Rock, will stand when the storm comes. They will be preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing

disquiet. They will be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. Those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave; will carry cheerfully through that dark valley; will be approved by the Judge; and will be crowned with endless glory, 2 Cor. 1. 12; 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

7. Those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will yield no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; will be no fence against temptations to apostasy, in a time of persecution. When God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite? Job 27. 8. The house fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another. May the Lord make us wise builders for eternity. May we come to Christ, hear, believe his word, and show our faith by our works of conscientious, unreserved obedience. Then nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ Jesus.

The multitudes were astonished at the wisdom and energy of Christ's doctrine. They felt his instructions had a commanding influence upon their understandings and affections; and that he spake very differently from those who only taught ceremonies, outward duties, and their own traditions. May there be many now who shall declare the same truths with some measure of his energy and authority; and may they be in the place of such as continue to teach after the manner of the scribes and pharisees of old.

This sermon, ever so often read over, is always new. How full of Divine doctrine! Clear light all along. Every word carries evidence of its Author. Let us be more and more particular in our purposes, making some one or other of these blessednesses and christian graces our main object in succession, even for weeks together. Let us not rest in general and confused desires after them, whereby we grasp at all, and catch nothing.—(88.)

21. The Jews believed that every descendant of Abraham would certainly be saved. *Turretin* quotes passages from the Jewish writings, to show this belief, which our blessed Lord here warns against.

23. "I never knew you," is a Hebraism, and means, "I never approved you, never acknowledged you."—*T. H. Horne*.

25-27. The houses in Palestine often are very slightly built, and when the rains are violent, they not unfrequently are destroyed by the mountain torrents.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 2-4.	M. 1. 40-44.	L. 5. 12-14.
Ver. 5-13.		L. 7. 1-10.
Ver. 14-17.	M. 1. 29-34.	L. 4. 38-41.
Ver. 18-27.	M. 4. 35-41.	{ L. 8. 22-25.
		{ L. 9. 57-62.
Ver. 28-34.	M. 5. 1-17.	L. 8. 26-37

§ 36. Ver. 1. *Multitudes follow Christ.*

This verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon. The people that heard Christ were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that though he was so strict a lawgiver, and so faithful a reprover, they diligently attended him. Those to whom Christ has manifested himself, desire to know more of him.

§ 29. Ver. 2-4. *Jesus heals a leper.*

In these verses we have an account of Christ's cleansing a leper. This is fitly recorded with the first of Christ's miracles, because the leprosy was looked upon, among the Jews, as a particular mark of God's displeasure, Lev. 13. It is among the proofs of his being the Messiah, ch. 11. 5. He also showed himself to be the Saviour of his people from their sins; for though every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it, as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was in a special manner so. Therefore in the laws concerning it, Lev. 13. and 14. it is treated, not as a sickness, but as an uncleanness. The priest was to pronounce the party clean or unclean; but the power and the honour of making the lepers clean was reserved for Christ, who comes to do that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Rom. 8. 3. The law discovered sin, for by the law is the knowledge of sin, and it pronounced sinners unclean, as the priest did the leper, but could go no further; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But Christ takes away sin, cleanses us from it, and so perfects for ever them that are sanctified.

The leper came and worshipped Christ, as one clothed with Divine power.

The cleansing of him may be considered,

1. As a temporal mercy; a mercy to the body. And so it directs us, not only to apply to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply ourselves to him. We cannot be so sure of God's will to bestow temporal mercies, as we may be of his power; for his power in them is unlimited, but his promise of them is limited by a regard to his glory and our good. When we cannot be sure of God's will, we may be sure of his wisdom

and mercy, to which we may cheerfully refer ourselves. This makes the expectation easy, and the event comfortable.

2. As a typical mercy. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God: to be restored to this, ought to be our great concern. It is our comfort when we apply ourselves to Christ, as the great Physician, that if he will, he can make us clean; and we should, with humble, believing boldness, go to him and tell him so. No guilt is so great, but there is a sufficiency in his righteousness to atone for it; no corruption so strong, but there is a sufficiency in his grace to subdue it. To be made clean we must commend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour. I throw myself at thy feet, and if I perish, I will perish there.

The leprosy was a noisome, loathsome disease, yet Christ touched the leper. There was a ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch; but Christ would show, that when he conversed with sinners, he was in no danger of being infected by them; for the prince of this world had nothing in him.

Christ spake the word, and healed the leper. 1. Here is a word of kindness, "I will." I am as willing to help thee, as thou art to be helped. Those who by faith apply themselves to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is willing, freely willing, to give them the mercy and grace they come to him for. He has given all possible demonstration, that he is as willing as he is able to save sinners. 2. Here is a word of power, I will that thou be clean. Such a word as this is necessary to the cure, and effectual for it; the almighty grace which speaks it, shall not be wanting to those who truly desire it.

Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately. Those afflictions are blessed that bring us acquainted with Christ, and cause us to seek help and salvation from him.

Christ gave the leper after directions. It is fit that those who are cured by Christ should ever after be ruled by him. See thou tell no man till thou hast showed thyself to the priest. And he has pronounced thee clean; and so thou hast a proof, both that thou hast been a leper, and art now thoroughly cleansed. Christ would have his miracles appear in their

full light and evidence, and not be published till they could appear so. Those who preach the truths of Christ should be able to prove them, to defend what they preach, and convince gainsayers.

Or, lest the priest, out of malice, should refuse to own that the man was actually cleansed, when he heard that he had been cured by Jesus. Our Lord also sought to avoid attracting notice or giving umbrage to the ruling powers, before he had given sufficient proofs of his Divine mission.—(100.)

Therefore go show thyself to the priest, according to the law, Lev. 14. 2. Christ took care to have the law observed. Let those who are cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, have recourse to Christ's ministers, and open their case, that they may assist their inquiries into their spiritual state, advise, comfort, and pray for them.

Offer the gift that Moses commanded, and it shall be a testimony that there is one among them, who does that which the high-priest cannot do. Let it remain upon record as a witness of my power, and a testimony for life to them. if they will use it and improve it; but against them, if they will not; for so Christ's word and works are testimonies.

§ 37. Ver. 5-13. *A centurion's servant healed.*

This centurion was a heathen, a Roman soldier. In these respects he might be expected to show the strongest prejudices and the greatest contempt for the Jews and their religion. Yet he had got acquainted with the scriptures, and was become a humble, spiritual worshipper of the God of Israel. By his liberality and good conduct he had overcome the prejudices of the Jews against him as a Gentile. He had heard of the miracles and doctrines of Christ, and conceived exalted ideas of him; but it was the illness of his servant brought him acquainted with the Saviour. Though he was a soldier, yet he was a godly man. God has his among all sorts of people. No man's calling or place will be an excuse for unbelief and impiety; none shall say in the great day, I had been religious, if I had not been a soldier; for even such there are among the ransomed of the Lord.

Observe how pathetically he represents his servant's case. We should concern ourselves for the souls of our children and servants, who are spiritually sick of the palsy; senseless of spiritual evils, inactive in that which is spiritually good; and

bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, bring them to the means of healing and of health.

Observe his great humility and self-abasement. Humble souls are made more humble by Christ's gracious condescensions to them. Observe, the language of his humility speaks high thoughts of our Lord Jesus. In all our approaches to Christ, and to God through Christ, it becomes us to lie low in a sense of our own unworthiness to do any thing for God, to receive any good from him, or to have any thing to do with him.

Observe his great faith. The more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith, not only that Christ could cure his servant, but that he could cure him at a distance. This centurion believed, and it is undoubtedly true, that the power of Christ knows no limits, and therefore nearness and distance are alike to him, Jer. 23. 23. Also that he could cure him with a word. Herein he owns him to have a Divine power, an authority to command all the creatures and powers of nature, which enables him to do whatsoever he pleases in the kingdom of nature. This he here illustrates by the dominion he had, as a centurion over his soldiers, as a master over his servants. Such servants we all should be to God: we must go and come, according to the directions of his word, and the disposals of his providence. Bodily diseases are such servants to Christ. They seize us when he sends them, they leave us when he calls them back. It is matter of comfort to all who belong to Christ, for whose good his power is exerted and engaged, that every disease executes his command; is under his control, and is made to serve the intentions of his grace. Those need not fear sickness, nor what it can do, who see in it the hand of so good a Friend.

The centurion desired Jesus would heal his servant; Christ says, I will come and heal him; thus expressing more favour than the master either asked or thought of. Christ often outdoes the expectations of poor supplicants. He would not go down to see a nobleman's sick child, who besought him to come down, John 4. 47—49; but he proffers to go down to see a sick servant: thus does he regard the low estate of his people. Christ's humility, in being willing to come, gave an example

to the centurion, who owned himself unworthy to have him come, and he considered his house, the residence of a Gentile, an improper place for Jesus.

Christ applauded what he said to them that followed. Some believers are, in this world, confessed and acknowledged by Christ before men, in his eminent appearances for them and with them. He had not found so great faith, all things considered, and in proportion to the means. It speaks shame to Israel, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and all the assistances and encouragements of faith. When the Son of man comes, he finds little faith, and, therefore he finds so little fruit. The attainments of some, who have had but little helps for their souls, will aggravate the sin and ruin of many, who have plenty of the means of grace, and have not improved them.

Christ gives us here an idea of the persons that shall be saved. Few at one time, and in one place; yet, when they come all together, they will be a great many. He will come with ten thousands of his saints, Jude 14; with a company no man can number, Rev. 7. 9. When we come to heaven we shall miss many that we thought had been going thither; we shall meet many there that we did not expect. Christ also gives us an idea of the salvation itself. They shall sit down to rest from their labours: sitting denotes continuance; heaven is a remaining rest, it is a continuing city. They shall sit down to be feasted; which denotes both fulness of communication, and freedom and familiarity of communion, Luke 22. 30. Holy society is a part of the felicity of heaven; and those on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are most obscure, shall share in glory with the renowned patriarchs.

In the great day it will not avail men to have been outwardly children of the kingdom, either as Jews or as Christians; for men will then be judged, not by what they were called, but by what they were. Being born of professing parents denominates us children of the kingdom; but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to show, we shall be cast out.

Christ made the cure as great a favour to the centurion as it was to his servant, and much greater; As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. The servant got a cure of his disease, but the master got the

confirmation and approbation of his faith. Be it done as thou believest. What could he have more? What was said to him, is said to all, Believe, and ye shall receive; only believe. See the power of Christ, and the power of faith. As Christ can do what he will, so an active believer may have what he will from Christ.

The servant was perfectly cured when Jesus spake these words. His disease was an apt emblem of the enfeebled wretched state of a poor sinner's soul, from which Christ recovers it by his word and Spirit; and thus communicates the ability of serving God with acceptance and delight. The healing of our souls is at once the effect and evidence of our interest in the blood of Christ.

6. Every kind of palsy, especially of long continuance, is either incurable, or is found to yield with the utmost difficulty to medical skill, even in young subjects; so that I have frequently remarked, that all the diseases which were referred to Christ for cure, appear to have been of the most obstinate and hopeless kind.—*Henry from Mercurialis.*

9. That is, "Under the authority of others."—*A. Clarke.*

11. The word translated sit, signifies to recline, the ancient posture at meals.

§ 98. Ver. 14—17. *Cure of Peter's wife's mother.*

Here we find that Peter had a wife, and yet was called to be an apostle of Christ, who countenanced the married state, by being thus kind to Peter's wife's relations. The church of Rome, therefore, which forbids ministers to marry, goes contrary to that apostle from whom they pretend to derive infallibility! He had his wife's mother with him in his family, which is an example to be kind to our relations.

Christ touched her hand. This was an intimation of his kindness and tenderness. It likewise shows the way of spiritual healing, by the exertion of the power of Christ with his word, and the application of Christ to ourselves. The scripture speaks the word, the Spirit gives the touch, touches the heart, touches the hand. She arose and ministered to them. By this it appears that the mercy was at once perfected. Those who recover from fevers commonly are weak and feeble some time after; but to show that this cure was above the power of nature, she was immediately so well as to go about the business of the house. The mercy was sanctified; and the mercies that are so, are indeed perfected. Those must be humble

whom Christ has honoured. Being delivered, she studies what she shall render.

The miracles which Jesus did being noised abroad, many thronged to him. He cast out devils; cast out the evil spirits with his word. There may be much of Satan's agency, by the Divine permission, in those diseases for which natural causes may be assigned, especially in the diseases of the mind; but about the time of Christ's being in the world, there seems to have been more than an ordinary letting loose of the devil, to possess and vex the bodies of people. It was wisely ordered so, that Christ might show his power over Satan, and the purpose and design of his coming into the world, which was to disarm and dispossess Satan, to break his power, and to destroy his works; and his success was as glorious as his design was gracious. He healed all that were sick; all without exception, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad.

The accomplishment of the Old Testament prophecies was the great proof of Christ being the Messiah; among other things it was written of him, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, Isa. 53. 4. Here it is said that he hath borne our sicknesses; and our sins make our sicknesses our griefs. Christ bore away sin by the merit of his death, and bore away sickness by the miracles of his life; nay, although those miracles are ceased, we may say, that he bore our sicknesses then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree; for sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body; and there is more, in this one line of the gospel, to support and comfort us under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers—that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows. He bore them for us in his sufferings, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities: he bears them off from us, and makes them sit light, if it be not our own fault.

While we rejoice in the comforts of Christ's salvation, let us remember the pain, labour, and suffering which he endured, when he took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses and sins, that we may not grudge labour, trouble, or expense in doing good to others.

16. See general note, Demoniacs.

17. *Magee* refers the first term, and the corresponding Hebrew word in Isaiah, to bodily disor-

ders, the second to diseases of the mind; the former signifying Christ's removal of the sicknesses of men by miraculous cures, the latter his bearing their sins on the cross. He fully refutes the unitarian perversion of the passage, which would limit it to the removal of diseases, without respect to Christ's propitiatory sacrifice.

§ 50. Ver. 18—22. *The scribe's zealous proposal.*

Christ went about to do good; he removed when he saw multitudes about him. Thus he would try whether their zeal would carry them to follow him, when his preaching was removed to some distance. Many would be glad of such helps, if they could have them at next door, who will not be at the pains to follow them to the other side. But we must follow Christ without delay. Here is a specimen of the hinderances by which many are kept from closing with Christ, and cleaving to him, warning us so to set out in following Christ that we may not come short. His instructions are for our use.

1. Here is one that was too hasty in promising; he was a scribe, a scholar, a learned man, one of those that studied and expounded the law. Observe how he expressed his forwardness; Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. His profession of a self-dedication to Christ is very ready, and seems to be from his unbiassed inclination; of his own accord, he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ. He is very resolute—I am determined, I will do it, and he does not make any reserve. Yet it appears, by Christ's answer, that his resolution was rash, his ends low and carnal. Either he did not consider at all, or he saw the miracles Christ wrought, and hoped he would set up a temporal kingdom, and wished to apply betimes for a share in it. There are many resolutions for religion, produced by sudden conviction, and taken up without due consideration, that come to nothing.

Christ let him know that this Son of man, whom he was so eager to follow, had not where to lay his head. Now from this account of Christ's deep poverty, we observe, that the Son of God, when he came into the world, put himself into such a very low condition, as to want the convenience of a certain resting-place, which the meanest of the creatures have. It may encourage us to trust God for necessities, that the beasts and birds have such good provision; and it may comfort us, if we want necessities, that our Master did so before us. Our Lord

Jesus, when he was here in the world, submitted to the disgraces and distresses of extreme poverty for our sakes, not only that he might in all respects humble himself, and fulfil the scriptures, which spake of him as poor and needy, but that he might show the vanity of worldly wealth, and teach us to look on it with holy contempt.

When a scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he should have encouraged him; one scribe might be capable of doing him more credit and service than twelve fishermen; but Christ saw his heart, and answered to the thoughts of that, and therein teaches us all how to come to Christ. The scribe's resolve seems to have been sudden; and it is no advantage to religion to take men by surprise; let him that will follow Christ know the worst of it. His resolve also seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle; but Christ tells him that he had not a place to lay his head on, and that if he follow him, he cannot expect to fare better than he fared. Christ will accept none for his followers who aim at worldly advantages in following him, or design to make anything but heaven of their religion. We have reason to think this scribe went away.

2. Here is another that was too slow in performing. Delay in execution is as bad on the one hand, as hastiness in resolution is on the other. When we have taken time to consider, and then have determined, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow, which we could do to-day.

Observe here, the excuse this disciple made, to defer an immediate attendance on Christ. His father was now sick, or dying, or dead, (or some think he was only aged,) and he desired leave to attend upon him to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed reasonable, yet it was not right. He had not the zeal he should have had for the work, and therefore urged this because it seemed a plausible plea. An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. The want of leisure is the want of inclination. Suppose it to come from filial affection and respect for his father, still the preference should have been given to Christ. Many are hindered from and in the way of serious godliness, by over concern for their families and relations.

Jesus said to him, Follow me; and, no



doubt, power accompanied this word to him as to others; he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him. The scribe said, I will follow thee; to this man Christ said, Follow me: comparing them together, it is intimated that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us; he calls whom he will, Rom. 9. 16. And though chosen vessels may make excuses, and delay compliance, yet when Christ calls, he will overcome, and make the call effectual. Let the dead bury their dead was a proverbial expression; let one dead man bury another; rather let them lie unburied, than the service of Christ should be neglected. Let the dead, spiritually, bury the dead corporally. Burying the dead, especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time; it may be done as well by others who are not called to be employed for Christ; thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that. The Nazarites were not to mourn for their own parents, because they were holy to the Lord, Numb. 6. 6-8; nor was the high-priest to defile himself for the dead, not for his own father, Lev. 21. 11, 12. If Christ requires our service, affection even for the nearest and dearest relatives, and for such things as otherwise would have been our duty, must give way.

20. No secure and fixed place of residence.

The title of Son of man is found in Dan. 7. 13, and Ps. 8. 4. In the gospels it is only used by Christ himself, and is found sixty-one times, and always with reference to some acknowledged character or work of the Messiah. It shows that our Lord united in his person both the Divine and human nature. Unquestionable as is the assertion of the Messiah's *real* humanity, it is by no means an assertion of a *mere* and exclusive human nature.—J. P. Smith. Middleton observes that in a variety of places in which our Saviour calls himself the Son of man, the allusion is either to his present humiliation or his future glory; and if this remark be true, we have, though an indirect, yet a strong and perpetual declaration that the human nature did not originally belong to him, and was not properly his own. *Schleusner* says, "Christ is called the Son of man by way of especial distinction, on account of the human nature which he assumed."

22. The Jews used to speak of those as dead who had departed from the precepts of the law.

§ 50. Ver. 23-27. Christ and his disciples in a storm.

Christ chose to cross the lake, that he might show that all power is his, both in heaven and in earth. It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in, and pray to, who knows what it is to be on

the water, and to be in storms there. His disciples followed him. Those only will be found true disciples of Christ, that are willing to follow wherever he leads.

Christ could have prevented this storm, but that would not have been so much for his glory and the confirmation of their faith, as their deliverance. Christ would show that those who are passing, with him, over the ocean of this world, must expect storms.

Jesus Christ was asleep in this storm. He was in watchings often, and continued all night in prayer to God. His human nature, like to ours in every thing but sin, was wearied, and he slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples. They, in their fear, came to their Master. Having no resource but in his power, yet not conceiving that he could exert it while asleep, they awoke him. Their petition is, Lord, save us.

Thus is it in a soul; when lusts and temptations are swelling and raging, and God is as it were asleep to it, this brings it to the brink of desperation. Then it cries for a word from his mouth, Lord Jesus, keep not silence to me, or I am undone. And this is one main end for which he does sleep—to awaken us; to rouse and stir our prayers, which commonly are heavy and lifeless in times of ease, but by the force of a sharp affliction, or when near to pressing danger, the heart is awakened and speaks itself; it will run straight to God, as confident of his power and readiness to deliver.—(88.)

He rebuked the disciples, not for disturbing him with their prayers, but for their fears. Why are ye fearful? Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let heathen mariners tremble in a storm, but you should not be so. Inquire into the reasons of your fear, and weigh them. He discovers the cause and spring of their fears; O ye of little faith. Many that have true faith, are weak in it. Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day; to torment themselves that things are bad with them, and with dismal conclusions that they will be worse. The fearfulness of Christ's disciples in a storm, and their unbelief, the cause of it, are very displeasing to the Lord Jesus; they reflect dishonour upon him, and create disturbance to themselves.

He rebukes the wind. See his absolute dominion over all the creatures, which speaks both his honour, and the happi-

ness of those that have him on their side. There was a great calm, all of a sudden. Ordinarily, after a storm, it is a good while ere the waters settle; but if Christ speak the word, not only the storm ceases, but all the effects of it. Great storms of doubt and fear in the soul, under the power of the spirit of bondage, sometimes end in a wonderful calm, created and spoken by the Spirit of adoption.

This excited their astonishment. They never saw a storm so immediately turned into a perfect calm. It has all the marks of a miracle. Observe their admiration of Christ; every thing in him is admirable. The reason of it; even the winds and the sea obey him. He that can do this, can do any thing, can do enough to encourage our confidence and comfort in him, in the most stormy day, within or without, Isa. 26. 4.

§ 51. Ver. 29—34. *Jesus heals two demoniacs of Gadara.*

Besides the general instance here given us of Christ's power over Satan, we have especially discovered to us, the way and manner of evil spirits in their enmity to man. Two men possessed with devils came from among the tombs. They were exceedingly fierce; not only ungovernable themselves, but mischievous to others. Where Satan rules a man by those lusts that war in the members, pride, envy, malice, revenge, they make him as unfit for human society, as unworthy of it.

They bade defiance to Christ, and disclaimed all interest in him. It is a proof of the power of God over the devils, that, notwithstanding the mischief they studied to do by and to these poor creatures, yet they could not keep them from meeting Jesus Christ. But they expected no benefit from him, they declined all contest with him, they wanted to have nothing to do with him, yet acknowledged him to be the Saviour of sinners, the Son of God. It is true that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour; they neither have, nor hope for any benefit by him. O the depth of this mystery of Divine love, that fallen man hath so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! Heb. 2. 16. Surely here was torment, to be forced to own the excellency that is in Christ, and yet that they had no interest in him. It is possible for men to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet have nothing to do with him. It is as true, that the devils desire

not to have any thing to do with Christ as a *Ruler*; they hate him, and are in open rebellion against him. See whose language they speak, who will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ, and will not have him to reign over them. But it is not true that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a *Judge*; for they have, and they know it. These devils could not deny but that they are bound over to his judgment.

The power of apostate angels might well excite our apprehensions, were it not for the superior power and grace of the Redeemer. We secure ourselves with much care against a few ruffians of our own race, but seldom reflect upon the legions of devils which have constant access to us. What cause have we for gratitude that we are preserved! And the believer, in the path of duty, need not fear these roaring lions; he is safe under his Almighty Shepherd. •

There is also a word of dread and deprecation. To be turned out, and tied up from doing mischief, is a torment to the devil, all whose comfort and satisfaction are in man's misery and destruction. Should not we then count it our heaven to be doing well, and reckon that our torment, whether within or without, which hinders us from well-doing? Under the delusions of Satan, the poor sinner fancies religion can only make him uneasy.

When they were turned out of the men possessed, they asked leave to enter into the swine. Hereby they discover their inclination to do mischief. If they might not be suffered to hurt men in their bodies, they would hurt them in their goods, and in that also they intended hurt to their souls, by making Christ a burden to them. They again own Christ's power over them. This is comfort to all the Lord's people, that though the devil's power be very great, yet it is limited, and not equal to his malice; what would become of us if it were? Especially, that it is under the control of our Lord Jesus, our most faithful, powerful friend and Saviour. Satan and his instruments can go no further than he is pleased to permit. They cannot break his hedge of protection about his people; they cannot enter a swine without his leave.

They had leave. God does often, for wise and holy ends, permit the efforts of Satan's rage. Even their wrath is made to praise Christ, and the remainder of it

he does and will restrain. Christ permitted this for the conviction of the Sadducees that were then among the Jews, who denied the existence of spirits. We see not the wind, but it would be absurd to deny its existence, when we see trees and houses blown down by it. Also, for the punishment of the Gadarenes, who perhaps, though Jews, took liberty to eat swine's flesh, contrary to the law: at any rate, their keeping swine to sell to the Gentiles among them, was evil.

The devils were not bid to save the lives of these swine, and, therefore, they were made to run violently down a steep place into the sea, where they all perished. The possession which the devil gets is for destruction. Thus the devil hurries people to sin, hurries them to that they have resolved against, which they know will be shame and grief to them: miserable is the condition of those led captive by him at his will. Observe what effect this had upon the owners. The whole city came out to meet Jesus. Thus many go out, in profession, to meet Christ for company, who have no real affection for him, nor desire to know him. Their covetousness made them willing to be rid of him. And now the devils had what they aimed at, in drowning the swine. Satan seduced our first parents, by possessing them with hard thoughts of God, and kept the Gadarenes from Christ, by suggesting that he came into their country to destroy their cattle. Thus the devil does mischief in the christian church, and then lays the blame upon christianity. They besought him that he would depart. This language proved them to be under the power of Satan, as much as those possessed with the devils, but in another and a more criminal sense. From such possession and such madness, let us earnestly pray to be delivered.

There are a great many who prefer their swine before their Saviour, and so come short of Christ and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his word to have place in them, because he and his word will be the destruction of their brutish lusts—those swine which they give themselves up to feed. There is nothing so base and filthy that men will not do for money; and nothing more prejudices men against the gospel than the pursuit of wealth by unlawful means. Perhaps confirmed avarice is more seldom

cured than any other distemper or possession of the soul. And justly will Christ forsake all that are weary of him, and say to them hereafter, Depart, ye cursed, who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us,

25. The tombs in the east were generally small rooms; sometimes excavations in rocks, at a small distance from towns or cities. They were often resorted to by destitute wanderers; they would afford shelter for demonsiacs or other outcasts from society.

32. Christ did not order the devils to enter the herd of swine, but gave them permission. Thus was manifested the exertion of a supernatural power; it was a just punishment to the Jews; and would convince the Greeks of the sacredness of the law of Moses. It also evinced that there could be no collusion in these dispossessions, as a herd of swine could not be confederates in any fraud or deception.

## CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 2—17. M. 2. 1—22. L. 5. 17—39.

Ver. 18—26. M. 5. 22—43. L. 8. 41—56.

§ 52. Ver. 1. *Jesus returns to Capernaum.*

Observe Christ's justice—that he left the Gadarenes. He will not tarry long where he is not welcome. Also his patience—that he did not leave some destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved. At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are therefore put together here, though, in the harmony of the evangelists, other events intervened.

1. The first verse of this chapter should have been added to the preceding, as it seems evident that the miracle of healing the man sick of the palsy was wrought before the casting out the devils at Gadara.

§ 38. Ver. 2—8. *Jesus heals a paralytic.*

In the cure of this man, observe,

1. The faith of his friends in bringing him to Christ. His distemper was such that he could not come to Christ, but as he was carried. Jesus saw their faith, the faith of the paralytic himself, as well as of them that brought him. Their faith was a strong faith; they firmly believed that Jesus Christ both could and would heal him. It was a humble faith; though the sick man was unable to stir a step, they brought him to attend on Christ. It was an active faith. A strong faith regards no obstacles in pressing after Christ.

2. The favour of Christ, in what he said to him; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. This was a sovereign cordial to a sick man, and was enough to make all his bed in his sickness; and to make it easy to him. Christ bids him be of good cheer, and then cures

him. He would have those to whom he deals his gifts, to be cheerful in seeking him, and in trusting in him; to be of good courage. Thy sins are forgiven thee, therefore thou shalt be healed. Sin may be pardoned, and yet the sickness not removed; the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned: but if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us. It would be far better to have the pardon of sins, and to be left under incurable disease till death releases, than to be cured of sickness, and left under the guilt and power of sin.

Whether the sick man most desired or expected this forgiveness at the hands of Christ we cannot tell, but if he thought not of it, what a surprise of love! It is good coming to Jesus on any terms, upon any errand. They that seek pardon with sorrow, shall be sure to find it with joy; and they that find it without previous sorrow, shall yet be sure to find that sorrow for sin after pardon, if not before. And truly it seems sweetest and kindest when mercy melts the heart. Well may Christ say, Be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee. What can dismay after this? The heart wholly filled with Divine peace and love, bears up all, and sorrow is turned into joy before a soul thus assured. But though this is great encouragement to sinners, it is no encouragement to sin. If thou bring thy sins to Jesus Christ, as thy malady and misery to be cured of, and delivered from it is well; but to come with them, as thy darlings and delight, thinking still to retain them and receive him, is a gross mistake, a miserable delusion. The great intention of the blessed Jesus in the redemption he wrought, is to separate our hearts from sin.—(88.)

3. The cavil of the scribes at that which Christ said. See how the greatest instance of Heaven's power and grace is branded with the blackest note of hell's enmity! Christ's pardoning sin is termed blasphemy; and so it would have been, if he had not had Divine power for it.

4. The conviction which Christ gave them of the unreasonableness of this cavil, before he proceeded. Our Lord Jesus has perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. Thoughts are secret, yet open before Christ, the eternal Word, Heb. 4. 12, 13. He could say to them, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

There is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. In them lies the root of bitterness, Gen. 6. 5. He asserted his authority in the kingdom of grace. He shows that the Son of man, the Mediator, has power on earth to forgive sins. Christ's miracles confirm that he was the Son of God; the power that appeared in his cures, proved him sent of God; and the pity that appeared in them proved him sent of God, to heal and save. It had particular force in this case. The scribes stood much upon legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in that; Christ designed to show that his great errand to the world was, to save his people from their sins.

5. The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spake healing to him. Christ bid him take up his bed, to show that he was perfectly cured; not only he had no more occasion to be carried upon his bed, but that he had strength to carry it. Christ sent him to his house, to be a blessing where he had been so long a burden.

6. The impression this made upon the multitude. Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give God thanks for them. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him as a man to whom God had given such power. God must be glorified in all the power that is given to men to do good. For all power is originally his.

2. The Jews were accustomed to regard diseases as the effects of sin.

§ 31. Ver. 9. *Matthew called.*

Observe here the call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was common for the same person to have two names.

Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom, for he was a publican, or collector of the taxes. He was in his calling, as the rest of those whom Christ called, ch. 4. 18. As Satan comes, with his temptations, to the idle, so Christ comes, with his calls, to those who are employed. But it was a calling of ill name among the Jewish people, because it was attended with much corruption and temptation, and there were few in that business who were honest men. Matthew himself owns what he was before his conversion, as

does St. Paul, 1. Tim. 1. 13, that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show, that God has his children among all sorts of people.

The just man is the first accuser of himself. Whom do we hear blazon the shame of Matthew, but his own mouth? Matthew the evangelist tells us of Matthew the publican. His fellows call him Levi, as if unwilling to lay their fingers on the spot of his displeasing profession, he himself will not smother it, but publishes it to all the world in thankful recognition of the mercy that called him; liking well that his baseness should set off the glorious lustre of the grace by which he was elected. That word was enough, Follow me; that power sweetly inclines which could forcibly command. We are all naturally averse from thee, O God; do thou bid us to follow thee; draw us by thy powerful word, and we shall run after thee. Speak by the effectual word of the Spirit to our heart, the world cannot hold us down, Satan cannot stop our way, we shall arise and follow thee.—(34.)

A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the author, and his word as the means. The call was effectual, for Matthew arose, and followed him immediately; neither denied nor deferred his obedience. The power of Divine grace answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. He quitted his post, and though we find the disciples, that were fishers, occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

§ 52. Ver. 10—13. *Matthew, or Levi's feast.*

Some time after his call, probably upon closing his secular concerns, Matthew made an entertainment to which he invited Jesus and his disciples, and a number of his former acquaintance, the publicans. Matthew sought an opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience what their temptations were, and pitied them; he knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Those who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but desire that others also may be brought to him, and would contribute towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone.

Christ made no scruple of coming; this

was noticed by the pharisees, who inquired how he could sit at meat with such men. Jesus explained his conduct by an allusion which declared his own character, and exposed their pride and hypocrisy. Persons in health have no need of a physician, but the sick know his value, and it is proper for him to go among them, though their diseases may render their company unpleasant. None but humbled sinners know how to value a Saviour, and to profit by his help. Those who suppose their souls to be in health will not welcome the spiritual Physician. This was the case with the pharisees; they despised Christ, because they thought themselves whole; but the poor publicans and sinners felt they wanted instruction and amendment; therefore, though he loved neither their conduct nor their company, his compassion led him to go among them as a Physician, to bring health and cure to their souls. Sin is the sickness of the soul; sinners are spiritually sick.

It concerns christians to be able to vindicate Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be ready always to give an answer to those that ask a reason of the hope that is in them, 1 Pet. 3. 15. It is easy, and too common, to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions. It may justly be suspected that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace—who are not pleased with their obtaining it.

Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy: to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy. Observe how Christ quotes this passage, Go ye, and learn what that meaneth. Hosea 6. 6. It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, we must learn to understand the meaning of it. And those have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, who have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. The scripture that Christ quoted, served not only to vindicate him, but to show that true religion consists not in external observances, not in shows of sanctity, not in particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others; in righteousness and peace. Also to condemn the pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent

with, and perhaps subservient to their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

Christ urges the nature and end of his own commission. Observe, his errand was to call to repentance. This was his first text, ch. 4. 17, and it was the tendency of all his sermons. The gospel call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our mind, and to change our way. His errand lay not with the righteous, but with sinners. That is, if the children of men had not been sinners, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as man, but of man as fallen. Had the first Adam continued in original righteousness, we had not needed a second Adam. Let us then inquire whether we have discovered our sickness, and have learned to follow the directions of our great Physician.

§ 62. Ver. 14—17. *Objections of John's disciples.*

The objections against Christ and his disciples, gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses. The disciples of John made objection against Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did, as an instance of the looseness of their profession. It appears that the pharisees made use of John's disciples in this. If the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to alienate them one from another. It is a pity that the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasions of strife and contention.

John was at this time in prison; his circumstances, his character, and the nature of his dispensation, led those who were peculiarly attached to him, to keep frequent fasts. They thought themselves and the pharisees, on this account, better than the followers of Jesus. Christ referred them to John's testimony of him as the Bridegroom of the church, John 3. 29, and reminded them that such austerities would not then be suitable; though there is no doubt but that Jesus and his disciples lived in a spare and frugal manner. It would be improper for his disciples to fast while they had the comfort of his presence; but when he was taken from them by his crucifixion and ascension, they would meet with various trials which would render fasting reasonable.

It is joy or melancholy with the followers of Christ, according as they have

more or less of their Saviour's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their heads, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, they are troubled, and walk heavily. The presence of the sun makes day, and its absence produces night.

Our Lord further referred them to common rules of prudence among men. It was not usual to take a piece of rough woollen cloth, which had never been prepared, to join to an old garment, for it would not connect with the soft, old garment, but would tear it further, and the rent would be made worse. Nor would men put new wine into old leathern bottles, which were going to decay, and would be liable to burst through the fermenting of the wine; but putting the new wine into strong, new bottles, both would be preserved. Thus, in those occasional duties, which are helps to religion, but not necessary for its existence, care is to be used, that they do not discourage. Hopeful persons might be driven away by too early impositions of this kind, or might be led to rest in them, and thus be fatally deluded. Great caution and prudence is necessary, that young converts may not receive gloomy and forbidding ideas of the service of our Lord; but duties are to be enforced as they are able to bear them.

16, 17. A piece of rough, new cloth, and that which has become tender by use, never can wear well together. The former will tear or injure the latter. Wine bottles, or rather bags, made of goat or sheep skins, are still used in Spain and other southern countries of Europe, as well as in the east.

§ 52. Ver 18—26. *Christ raises the daughter of Jairus—He heals the issue of blood.*

“While Christ spake these things,” ver. 18. We may suppose it a pleasing interruption given to the unpleasant work of disputation; which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave to go about a work of devotion or charity. A certain ruler of the synagogue had a little daughter, just dead, and this breach made upon his family comforts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. In trouble we should visit God; the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as Job, full down and worship.

Observe his humility in this address to Christ. He came to Christ himself. It is the highest honour to the greatest rulers,

personally to attend on the Lord Jesus. He worshipped him, gave him all imaginable respect. Those who would receive mercy from Christ, must honour him.

Now Christ works in an ordinary way, by nature, and not against it, and therefore we cannot in faith make such a request as this ruler. When our friends are dead, the case is determined; we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us. But while Christ was here upon earth, such confidence was allowable.

Jesus immediately arose, left his company, and followed him. Surely he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. He declined to go along with the nobleman, John 4, 48; yet he went with the ruler. The variety of methods Christ took in working his miracles, is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind, which those were in who applied to him, and which he who searcheth the heart perfectly knew. It was not for state that he took his attendants with him, but that they might be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to preach his doctrine.

A poor woman applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him by the way, as he followed the ruler, to whom it would be a great encouragement to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the case of weak believers.

Her case is more minutely related by the other evangelists, and we will not dwell upon it here, except to remark, how various are the distresses and humbling diseases to which sin has brought us. Yet if we do but touch, as it were, the hem of Christ's garment by living faith, our most inveterate evils will be healed; there is no other real cure, nor need we fear his knowing those things which are a grief and burden to us, and which we would not disclose to any earthly friend.

Jesus found the ruler's household in confusion; such work does death make when it comes into a family. The people in the neighbourhood came together, to comfort the parents, to prepare for, and attend on the funeral, which the Jews were not wont to defer long. Observe, the parents, who were most closely touched with the affliction, were silent, while the people and minstrels, whose lamentations were forced, made a noise. The loudest grief is not always the greatest. But this shows that the daughter was really dead.

Christ said, Give place. Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. Those who harden themselves in sorrow, should think they hear Christ saying to their disquieting thoughts, Give place. He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves. She was really dead, but not so to Christ. Death is a sleep; not the sleep of the soul, its activity ceases not, but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapt up in darkness and obscurity. And the death of the righteous is in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa. 57. 2. They sleep in Jesus, 1 Thess. 4. 14; they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but rest in hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall wake refreshed, wake to a new life, and wake to sleep no more. The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death of our dear relations. The apostle speaks of it as absurd to imagine that those who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished, 1 Cor. 15. 18; give place, therefore, to those comforts which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future state, and the glory to be revealed.

They laughed him to scorn. The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of Divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to confirm the miracle.

The people were put forth. Scorners who laugh at what is above their capacity, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ. The high-priest, who typified Christ, was not to come near the dead, Lev. 21. 10, 11; but Christ touched the dead. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ having power to raise the dead, is above the infection. Observe, He is the Lord of souls; he commands them forth, and commands them back, when, and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ take them by the hand: it is done in the day of his power. If this single instance of Christ's raising one newly dead so increased his fame, what will be his glory when all that

are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation!

The fame of this miracle went abroad into all that land: it was the common subject of discourse. Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. Though we have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound to receive his doctrine; and blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed, John 20. 29.

20. Not what we call the hem, but the tassel or fringe on the corners of the garment: see note, Numb. 15. 38.

23. Funerals in the east present a scene of considerable tumult. In addition to the loud lamentations of the relatives and friends of the deceased, and the various actions by which they manifest their grief, hired mourners and musicians are often employed, both in the house of mourning and to accompany the procession. *Chardin* states that the concourse of people in the east, where persons lie dead, is almost incredible.

§ 53. Ver. 27-31. *Jesus heals two blind men.*

Christ is the fountain of light as well as life. By raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first breathed into man the breath of life; by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to be the same that at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Observe the title which these blind men gave to Christ. At this time there was a general expectation of Messiah's appearing; these blind men know and proclaim in the streets of Capernaum that he is come, and that this is he; which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and pharisees who denied and opposed him. Those who, by the providence of God, are deprived of bodily sight, may yet, by the grace of God, have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened, as to discern those great things of God, which are hid from the wise and prudent.

Their petition was, Have mercy on us. It was foretold that the Son of David should be merciful, Ps. 72. 12. 13. Whatever our necessities and burdens are, we need no more for supply and support, than to share in the mercy of our Lord Jesus. Whether he heal us or not, if he have mercy on us, we have enough. As to the methods of mercy, we may safely and wisely refer ourselves to the wisdom of Christ. They said, Have mercy on us. It becomes those under the same affliction,

to join in the same prayers for relief. Fellow-sufferers should be joint-petitioners. In Christ is enough for all.

They followed him, crying aloud. He would try their faith, and would teach us to continue instant in prayer; always to pray, and not to faint; though the answer do not come presently, yet to wait for it, and to follow providence, even in those steps and outgoings of it which seem to neglect or contradict our prayers. It seemed rude to rush into the house after him, when he desired to retire; but such is the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, that they were not more bold than welcome.

When they came to him for mercy, he asked them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? Faith is the great condition of Christ's favours. What we would have him do for us, we must be fully assured that he is able to do. They followed Christ, and followed him crying; but the great question is, Do ye believe? Nature may work fervency, but it is only grace that can work faith. They had intimated their faith in the office of Christ as Son of David, and in his mercy; but Christ demands likewise a profession of faith in his power. Believe ye that I am able to do this; to bestow this favour; to give sight to the blind, as well as to cure the palsy and raise the dead? It is good to apply the general assurances of God's power and good-will, and the general promises, to our particular wants. To believe the power of Christ, is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to commit ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they answered without hesitation, Yea, Lord. Though he had kept them in suspense, they imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability.

Christ touched their eyes. He gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, and he puts the cure upon their faith. I know you do believe, and the power you believe in shall be exerted for you. It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith. Though others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to Him. Those who apply to Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with, not according to their fancies, nor according to their profession, but according to their faith. Unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all



that favour which is offered in the gospel. Our comforts ebb or flow, according as our faith is stronger or weaker.

Jesus, to avoid all appearance of ostentation, gave them a strict charge not to make known to any one by what means their sight had been restored, but their joy and gratitude were so great that they could not refrain themselves.

Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt setting up his kingdom by tumults and seditions, John 6, 15. As to the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Gadarenes, he never imposed silence on them, probably because those things would prepare them for the preaching of the apostles.—(99.)

§ 54. Ver. 32—34. *Jesus casts out a dumb spirit.*

Here is the healing of a dumb man. His case was very sad. See the malice of Satan against mankind, and in how many ways he shows it! But of the two, better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. This poor creature they brought to Christ, who healed not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those who were brought to him by their friends in the faith of others.

When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake. Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. When Christ, by his grace, casts the devil out of a soul, presently the dumb speaks. When Paul was converted, behold, he prays.

The Pharisees blasphemed. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they fathered them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion—a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it, ch. 12. 25. Because the people marvelled, they must say something to diminish the miracle, and this was all they could say.

Nothing can convince those who are under the power of pride. They will believe any thing, however false or absurd, rather than the holy scriptures; while the reflections they cast on those who are doing good to their fellow-creatures, only show the enmity of their hearts against a holy God.

§ 55. Ver. 35—38. *The zeal and compassion of Jesus occasion his sending forth the apostles.*

Though the pharisees cavilled at Christ and opposed him, he went on with his work; he told them of a kingdom of grace and glory, now to be set up under the government of a Mediator: this was good news, glad tidings of great joy.

He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of the meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as the souls of those that make the greatest figure.

He taught in their synagogues, that he might bear a testimony to solemn assemblies, even when there were corruptions in them. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. And that he might have an opportunity of preaching, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel church was founded, and christian meetings erected, the apostles often preached in the synagogues of the Jews.

Great multitudes resorted from distant places to hear Christ's doctrine. They were languishing in their souls for want of better instructions than those of their formal teachers, and were ready to faint with hunger and fatigue, by continuing long at a distance from their habitations. There were priests, Levites, and scribes, all over the land; but they were idol shepherds; therefore Christ had compassion on them as sheep scattered, as men perishing for lack of knowledge. To this day vast multitudes are as sheep not having a shepherd; we should have compassion and do all we can to help them.

Jesus Christ is a very compassionate Friend to precious souls. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the object of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-destroying souls, are the greatest miseries. The case of those is very pitiable, who have no ministers at all, or such as seek their own things, not the things of Christ, and to win souls. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity put him upon devising means for their good. It appears, Luke 6. 12, that upon this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he spent a great deal of time in prayer. Those we pity we should pray for. He

represented their case under a similitude. The multitudes desirous of spiritual instruction formed a plenteous harvest, growing in the field, which would require many active, industrious labourers: but there were few who deserved that character. Christ himself is the Lord of the harvest, and we shall find him sending forth labourers. The expression literally means, "thrust forth." It implies the powerful impulse of God upon the heart, needed to overcome the unwillingness of able ministers to enter on that important work, especially when it would expose to so many perils and hardships. Let us pray that many may be raised up and sent forth, who will labour in bringing souls to Christ. This duty is too much neglected.

Observe, it is a sign that God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those who have an interest at the throne of grace to pray for it, Ps. 10. 17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as labourers. They must pray that God would send them forth. Commissions given in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful.

## CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1.	M. 6. 7.	L. 9. 1.
Ver. 2-4.	M. 3. 16-19.	L. 6. 14-16.
Ver. 5-15.	M. 6. 7-11.	L. 9. 1-5.

§ 57. Ver. 1-4. *The apostles called.*

The persons here mentioned seem to have been called to constant attendance on Christ before this. They were now solemnly appointed to their important office, and sent forth, two and two, to prepare the people to receive him. The word apostle signifies messenger; they were Christ's messengers, sent forth to proclaim his kingdom.

All rightful authority is derived from Jesus Christ. The subordinate powers that be are ordained of him. It is an undeniable proof of the fulness of power which Christ used as Mediator, that he could impart his power to those he employed, and enable them to work, in his name, the same miracles that he wrought. These preachers were sent out destitute of all outward advantages; it was therefore requisite that they should have some extraordinary power to aid them.

The power that is committed to the ministers of Christ, is directly levelled against the devil and his kingdom. The devil, as an unclean spirit, is working

both in doctrinal errors, Rev. 16. 13, and in practical sinfulness, 2 Pet. 2. 10; and ministers have a charge against both.

Christ gave them power to heal all manner of sickness. He authorized them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, to prove that the design of the gospel is to heal and to save. An emphasis is laid upon the extent of their power to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases. In the grace of the gospel there is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady. There is no spiritual disease so malignant, so inveterate, but there is a sufficiency of power in Christ for the cure of it.

Their names are here left upon record, and it is their honour; yet they had infinitely more reason to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, Luke 10. 20, while the high and mighty names of the great ones of the earth are buried in the dust. Peter is named first, because he was first called, or because he was the most forward among them; but that gave him no power over the rest, nor is there the least mark of any supremacy given to him, or ever claimed by him. Judas Iscariot is always named last, and with that brand upon his name, "who also betrayed him." From the first, Christ knew what a wretch he was; yet Christ took him among the apostles. Thus the scriptures were fulfilled, and it would not be a discouragement to his church, when at any time afterwards vile scandals should break out. There is a day of discovery and separation coming. His infamy is as lasting as the reputation of the others. It no way takes from their true honour that some had been fishermen, and one a publican. All were sinners, saved by grace alone, loving their Saviour, and longing to recommend him to those around. This is the character of the minister who is moved by the Holy Ghost to take that office upon him.

2. Apostle denotes one sent by another. In the New Testament, it is used to denote a person employed to convey the message of salvation from God to man.

§ 57. Ver. 5-15. *The apostles instructed and sent forth.*

We have here the instructions that Christ gave to his disciples.

1. They must not go out of the land of Israel. The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have refused it. The Samaritans were the posterity of the people which the king of Assyria

planted about Samaria; it lay between Judea and Galilee, so that they could not avoid going into the way of the Samaritans, but they must not enter any of their cities. If the gospel be hid from any place, Christ thereby hides himself from that place. This restraint was upon them only in their first mission; afterwards they were appointed to teach all nations.

To the lost sheep of the house of Israel Christ appropriated his own ministry, and to them the apostles' first offer of salvation must be made. And there are lost sheep in every land; we must still seek them out, preaching repentance towards God, as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for the kingdom of God is not set up in a proud, impenitent, carnal heart.

2. He did not send them forth without an errand; wherever they went they must proclaim, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. This must be their text; in this subject they must enlarge. Let people know that the kingdom of the Messiah, the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must repent of their sins and forsake them, that they may be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. This proclaims salvation at hand, nigh to them that fear God. They *preached*, says Quessnel, to establish the faith; *the kingdom*, to animate the hope; *of heaven*, to inspire the love of heavenly things, and the contempt of earthly; *which is at hand*, that men may prepare for it without delay.—(11.)

3. He gave power to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine. This is not necessary now that the kingdom of God is come. To call for miracles now, is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The doctrine of Christ being sufficiently attested by the miracles He and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. It was to show that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is over all his works; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin. Therefore they are cautioned not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles; but further to exemplify the nature of the gospel kingdom, they were to give freely. And the reason is, because freely you have received. Simon Magus would not have offered money for the gifts of

the Holy Ghost, if he had not hoped to get money by them, Acts 8. 18. Christ's freeness in doing good to us, should make us free in doing good to others.

4. Their very appearance was to show they were free from love of gain, ver. 9, 10. In proclaiming the gospel of free grace for the healing and saving of men's souls, we must above all avoid the appearance of a mercenary disposition. Of all employments none is more disgraceful than that of a hireling minister. Yet the labourer is worthy of his meat, and if they are called to places where they have little prospect of support, they should go on in their work with simplicity and diligence, casting all their care upon the Lord. He will provide what is really needful, and they will generally see his hand in the way by which they are supplied, and taste his love in the provision made for them, more than those who have greater abundance; nor need they scruple to receive what is thus conferred, it will not detract from the independence and dignity of the ministerial character.

5. They are directed how to conduct themselves in strange towns and cities. It is supposed that there were some in every place disposed to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy. In the worst of times and places, we may charitably hope there are some better than their neighbours. The best are far from meriting the favour of a gospel offer; but some would be more likely than others, to give the apostles and their message a favourable entertainment. Public houses were no proper places for those who neither took money with them, nor expected to receive any; and those who entertain the gospel, must neither grudge the expense of it, nor promise themselves to get by it in this world. It is implied, that if they inquired who was worthy, they might discover them. In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue.

The servant of Christ is the ambassador of peace to whatever place he is sent. His commission reaches to the vilest of sinners, yet it behoves him to find out the best persons in every place. Ministers should evince a steadiness and consistency in their conduct, and show indifference as to outward things.

When they had found the house of one whom they thought worthy, they must

at their entrance salute it. In common civilities be beforehand with people, in token of your humility. He that will not receive your salutation kindly, will not receive your message kindly.

It seems that after they had inquired for the most worthy, it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy, ver. 13. Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon common report and opinion; we ought to use judgment and discretion.

The common salutation was, Peace be unto you; this, as they used it, was the peace of God, the peace of the kingdom of heaven that they wished. Christ tells them that this gospel prayer, for so it was now become, should be put up for all, as the gospel proffer was made to all, and that they should leave it to God, who knows the heart and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. It becomes us to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all.

They are directed as to those that refused them. The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with "some who will not so much as give them a hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel ministers, commonly go together. In this case the apostles must depart. The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would shake them off, Acts 13. 51; 18. 6.

The good will of the servants of Christ must not degenerate into timidity. The whole counsel of God must be declared, and those who will not attend to the gracious message, must be shown that their state is dangerous.

There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will be called to account for it, however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. All the pains of hell will be intolerable, but some will be more so than others. The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be more severe and heavy than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. It

will be more tolerable for these places, than for those who receive not Christ's ministers, and hearken not to their words. This should be seriously laid to heart by all that hear the gospel, lest their privileges only serve to increase their condemnation.

10. A staff was so necessary to travellers in Palestine and other rocky countries, that it was usual to carry a spare one; this our Lord here forbids.

14. The scribes taught that the dust of heathen lands defiled by the touch, and that it must not be brought into Judea. This injunction was to show that they esteemed the city as a heathen, profane, impure city, and as such abhorred it, though one of Israel.—*Lightfoot.*

§ 57. Ver. 16—42. *Directions to the apostles.*

Our Lord next warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were sent forth among those who would neither want will nor power to injure them, excepting as they were protected by Divine power. They were to unite prudence and sagacity with simplicity and purity, avoiding every thing which could give advantage to their enemies, all intermeddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble: and II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble, which the disciples should meet with. Christ foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise, but that being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

*First.* They should suffer hard things. Wicked men are like wolves, whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people are like sheep among them, ver. 16, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey. They are as sheep among wolves—that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth—that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth, will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

1. They must expect to be hated, v. 22. Those whom Christ loves, the world hates. It is grievous to be hated, but it is for his name's sake; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to those who are thus hated. It is for a good cause, and they have a good Friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself.

2. They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors, v. 17, 18. They must look for trouble, not only from inferior magistrates in the councils, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous. We find this often fulfilled in the Acts of the apostles.

3. They must expect to be put to death, v. 21. The malice of the enemies inflicts this; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after; the saints expect this; Neither count I my life dear to myself, Acts 20. 24. The wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs the seal of the truth, and the seed of the church.

4. They must expect to be branded with odious and disgraceful names and characters. They are even called Beelzebub, the name of the prince of the devils, ver. 25. See, and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon! Satan's sworn enemies are represented as his friends. Satan's sworn servants would be thought his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many times those that paint him on others' clothes, have him reigning in their own hearts. But there is a day coming when that which is hid will be brought to light.

5. These sufferings are represented by a sword and division, ver. 34, 35. They thought Christ came to give all his followers wealth and power in the world;—Christ came to give us peace with God, peace in our consciences, peace with our brethren, but in the world ye shall have tribulation. They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession will secure them from trouble in this world, for it will expose them to it.

Look not for peace, but a sword, v. 34. Christ came to give the sword of the word, with which his disciples fight against the world. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of the sword of persecution; he orders his church into a suffering state, for the trial and praise of his people's graces.

Look not for peace, but division, ver. 35. This effect of the preaching of the gospel is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. The faith of those who believe, condemns those that believe not and therefore they have an enmity

against them that believe. Where no true religion is found, men may avoid theological disputes; but where the doctrines of the cross are set forth, and sinners come to the Saviour, they are no longer of this world, but subjects of a kingdom directly opposed thereto. Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing.

Thus Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.

*Second.* These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer from men, ver. 17. Beware of men, even of those who are of the same nature with you—such is the depravity and degeneracy of that nature. Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils, 1 Cor. 15. 32. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind.

1. From men, mere men, and not saints; natural men, 1 Cor. 2. 14. men of this world, Ps. 17, 14. Saints are more than men, and are redeemed from among men, and therefore are hated by them. Persecutors are men, merely dependent, dying creatures; they are men, they are but men. Ps. 9. 20; and who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa. 51. 12.

2. From professing men, men that make a show of religion. They will scourge you in their synagogues, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church discipline: they looked upon the scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was five times scourged in the synagogues, 2 Cor. 11. 24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were most bitter persecutors of Christ and christianity.

3. From great men. The Jews not only scourged them, but they delivered them up to the Roman powers. Ye shall be brought before governors and kings, ver. 18. The kings of the earth set themselves against Christ's kingdom, Ps. 2. 1, 2; Acts 4. 25, 26. It has often been the lot of good men to have great men for enemies.

4. From all men, ver. 22. Ye shall be hated of all men, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men. So few are there that love, and own, and countenance Christ's righteous cause, that we

may say, the friends of it are hated of all men. As far as the apostasy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all the children of disobedience.

5. From those of their own kindred, ver. 21. A man shall be, upon this account, at variance with his own father; nay, and those of the tender sex shall become persecutors and persecuted. A man's foes shall be they of his own household, ver. 36. His friends will be incensed against him for embracing christianity, and especially for adhering to it when persecuted, and will join with his persecutors against him. The strongest bonds of relative love and duty, have often been broken through by enmity against Christ. Sufferings from such are most grievous; nothing cuts more than this, and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, Prov. 18. 19. The martyrologies are full of instances of this.

Upon the whole matter, it appears plainly, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations; while the open manner in which Christ told his apostles of the persecutions that awaited them, clearly showed that he knew his authority and influence over their hearts, and that he was fully able to support and recompense them.

II. With these predictions of trouble, we have here prescriptions of counsels and comforts for a time of trial. Christ sends them out exposed to danger indeed, and expecting it, but well armed with instructions and encouragements, sufficient to bear them up in all these trials.

Observe what Christ says, *First*. As counsel and direction in several things.

1. Be ye wise as serpents, ver. 16, a precept recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as it will be useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and therefore, they need the serpent's wisdom. In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them.

2. Be ye harmless as doves. Not only, do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any

ill-will; this must always go along with the former. We must be wise, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else. It must be the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially considering their enemies.

3. Beware of men, ver. 17. Avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; trust not in a friend, no, not in the wife of thy bosom, Micah 7. 5. Such a wretched world do we live in, that we know not whom to trust. Ever since our Master was betrayed by one of his own disciples, we have need to beware of men, of false brethren.

4. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak, ver. 19. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this care be cast upon God. Do not study to make fine speeches, and laboured periods. It argues a diffidence of your cause, to be solicitous in this matter. You know upon what grounds you go, and suitable expressions will occur, Dan. 3. 16. The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful how to do well, than how to speak well.

5. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another, ver. 23. In case of imminent peril, the disciples of Christ may, and must secure themselves by flight, when God, in his providence, opens to them a door of escape. They may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. No sinful, unlawful means may be used to make the escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases, wisdom and integrity are profitable to direct.

6. Fear them not, ver. 26, because they can but kill the body, ver. 28. Those who truly fear God, need not fear man; and those who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. The fear of man brings a snare: a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be striven and prayed against. Be the times ever so difficult, and events ever so threatening, yet we need not fear, while we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so good a hope, through grace. Yes,

this is soon said ; but when it comes to the trial, racks, tortures, dungeons, axes and gibbets, fire and fagot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart start back, especially when it is plain that they may be avoided by a few declining steps ; therefore we have a good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies—they kill the body, that is the utmost their rage can extend to. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath ; but this is out of the reach of their power. Tribulation, distress, and persecution may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God—cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Rom. 8. 35, 39.

Here is also a good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They sinned together ; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin ; and they must eternally suffer together. Let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. Happy is the man that fears always. The fear of God and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. As it is most right in itself, so it is most safe for us to obey God rather than men, Acts 4. 19. It is to be observed that this argument is twice used with reference to Christ's disciples, for they need to have their fear of man overpowered by the fear of God, as well as their worldly hopes overborne by the hopes of heaven.

7. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, ver. 27. Whatever hazards you run, publish and proclaim the everlasting gospel to all the world ; that is your business. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy you, but to suppress that ; therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish that. What I tell you, that speak ye. That which the apostles have delivered to us, is the same that they received from Jesus Christ, Heb. 2. 3. These ambassadors received their instructions in private. Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret varying from what he preached in public, John 18. 20. But they must deliver their embassy publicly, for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in, Prov. 1. 20, 21 ; 8. 2, 3. There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any ac-

count, to be concealed ; the whole counsel of God must be revealed, Acts 20. 27. In ever so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

*Second.* By way of comfort and encouragement. Without some powerful support, they could scarcely bear the prospect of such usage. Christ therefore shows them why they should be of good cheer.

1. Here is one word peculiar to their present mission, v. 23. They should not have gone over all the cities of Israel, praying and preaching, before the kingdom should come, in the exaltation of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit. Or, it rather refers to that time when Christ set up his kingdom as distinct from the Jewish church, by the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and his coming to take vengeance on the unbelieving Jews, by the destruction of Jerusalem, and the ruin of their church and state.

2. Here are many words that relate to their work in general, and the troubles they were to meet with in it ; they are good words, and comfortable words. Their sufferings were for a testimony, ver. 18. God's people, and especially God's ministers, are his witnesses, Isa. 43, 10, not only in their doing work, but in their suffering work. Hence they are called martyrs—witnesses for Christ, that his truths are of undoubted certainty and value—being witnesses for him, they are witnesses against those who oppose his gospel. On all occasions they were promised God's special presence, and the immediate assistance of his Holy Spirit, particularly when called to bear testimony before governors and kings. When God calls us out to speak for him, we may depend upon him to teach us what to say ; even when we labour under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements. They were not left to themselves, but the Spirit of wisdom spoke in them, ver. 20, as sometimes his providence wonderfully spoke for them ; by both together they were manifested in the consciences even of their persecutors.

3. He that endures to the end shall be saved, ver. 22. Here it is very comfortable to consider that there will be an end of these troubles ; they may last long, but will not last always. A believing prospect of the period of our troubles will be of great use to support us under them. As they are not eternal, so they are not intolerable ; they may be borne, and borne

to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms. The strength shall be according to the day, 1 Cor. 10. 13. Salvation will be the eternal recompense of all those that endure to the end. The weather is stormy, and the way foul, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory, has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2 Cor. 4. 16—18. Those who persevere are sure of the prize, and they only.

4. Whatever hard usage disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than their Master met with before, ver. 24, 25. The consideration of the ill treatment Christ received in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently.

5. There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, ver. 26. Do you publish it, ver. 27, for the truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known to all nations. It is a great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity.

6. The providence of God is in a special manner conversant about the saints, in their sufferings, ver. 29—31. See here the general extent of providence to all the creatures, even to the sparrows, ver. 29. These little animals are of small account, and yet they are not shut out of the Divine care. They do not light on the ground for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but your heavenly Father, by his providence, laid it ready for them. Now he that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints. Though the sparrows are so small a part of the creation, yet even their death comes within the notice of the Divine providence; much more does the death of his disciples. Therefore be not afraid of death, for your enemies have no power against you, but what is given them from above. There is enough in the doctrine of God's providence to silence all the fears of God's people; Ye are of more value than many sparrows. And further observe, the very hairs of your head are all numbered, ver. 30. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the account which God takes and keeps of all the concerns of his people. It is not to be made a matter of curious inquiry, but of en-

couragement, to live in a continual dependence upon God's providential care.

7. Christ will shortly, in the day of triumph, own those who now own him in the day of trial; when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and rejected by him, ver. 32, 33. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. However this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. It is dangerous for any to deny and disown Christ before men; for those who do so, will be disowned by him in the great day, when they have most need of him. That denial of Christ only is here meant which is persisted in, and that confession only can be entitled to the blessed recompense here promised, which is the real and constant language of faith and love. In the first ages of christianity, when for a man to confess Christ was to venture all that was dear to him in this world, it was more a trial of sincerity than afterwards when secular advantages attended it.

8. It was upon the condition of preparedness for suffering that Christ took them to be his followers, ver. 37—39. He told them at first that they were not worthy of him, if they were not willing to part with all for him. Men hesitate not at those difficulties which necessarily attend their profession; and they will either submit to those fatigues and troubles, or disclaim the privileges and advantages of their profession. Now, if religion be worth any thing, it is worth every thing; all who believe the truth of it, will soon come up to the price, and make every thing else to yield to it. Whatever we part with for this pearl of price, we may comfort ourselves with this persuasion, that it is well worth what we give for it. And as we must not be deterred from Christ by the hatred of our relations which he spoke of, so we must not be drawn from him by their love. It is a great encouragement to us, when we meet with crosses, that in bearing them we follow Christ; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings, to glory with him. He that thinks he has saved his life by denying Christ, shall lose it in an eternal death, ver. 39. They are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life.



9. Christ himself heartily espoused their cause, ver. 40—42. He that receiveth you, receiveth me. Christ thus directly assures the apostles that he considers himself immediately concerned in the reception they met with. See how Christ may still be entertained; his people and ministers we have always with us. Though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be ever so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted. Those who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his people and his ministers. They shall not only be accepted, but richly and suitably rewarded. They shall receive a reward. He does not say that they deserve a reward; we cannot merit any thing as wages from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God; and they shall in no wise lose it, as good services often do among men. The full reward will be deferred till the resurrection of the just; but it shall in no wise be lost, nor shall they be any losers by the delay. This is a prophet's reward, and a righteous man's, even spiritual blessings in heavenly things; and if we know how to value them, we shall reckon them good payment.

Let us then boldly confess Christ, and obey him before men, assured he will own us poor sinners as his brethren before his Father's throne. But wo to those who are ashamed of him, or of his words. Not even father, mother, son or daughter, prince or potentate, can at that awful hour do us the service that he can. Have they ever done so much to deserve our love? Surely our own hearts will declare us unworthy of him, if we prefer any earthly object before him. Let us then abide in him, showing our love to him in all things.

17. Courts of judgment were held in the synagogues, where they punished offenders by scourging. This has been the custom in later times, and in some countries those suspected of a preference to christianity have been secretly put to death in the synagogues.

23. The coming of the Son of man is considered here to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem.

25. The name in the original is Beelzeboul, the lord of dung, or, metaphorically, idolatry, probably so changed from Beelzebub, 2 Kings 1. 2, out of contempt. The Jews were accustomed thus to change the names of idols.—See *Bloomfield*.

27. The houses in the east have flat roofs, whither the inhabitants resort in an evening to enjoy the air, and to converse with each other and their neighbours. The most effectual way to make anything public is to proclaim it from the house-tops.

34. "On earth," should have been translated *this land*. The "sword," the Roman sword, was to punish this rebellious nation for their iniquities and rejection of Christ.—*A. Clarke*. Peace on earth, in a temporal sense, whether in the world in general, or Judea in particular, must not be expected as the immediate consequence of Christ's coming.—*Gill*. Between those who enjoy Divine peace and those who do not, a wide difference exists.

38. It was customary among the Romans to compel a condemned malefactor to carry his cross, or generally only the transverse beam, to the place of execution.

## CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 2-19. L. 7. 18-35.

§ 58. Ver. 1. *Christ's diligence in preaching the gospel.*

The first verse of this chapter joins to the foregoing chapter. When Christ had said what he had to say to his disciples, he departed thence. They were loth to leave their Master till he departed and separated from them; as the nurse withdraws the hand, that the child may learn to go by itself. It was expedient for them that Christ should go away for a while, that they might be prepared for his long departure. We have little account of what they did pursuant to their commission; but Christ departed to teach and preach in the cities. Our Divine Redeemer was unwearied in his arduous labour of love; and we should not be weary of well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

§ 39. Ver. 2-6. *Christ's answer to John's disciples.*

John Baptist, in prison, hearing of Christ's works, sent two disciples to him. Here is the question they had to propose: Art thou the Messiah promised, or not? Art thou the Christ? It is taken for granted, that the Messiah should come. It was one of the names by which he was known to the old testament saints, He that cometh, or shall come, Ps. 118. 26. He is now come, but there is another coming of his which we still expect. They intimate, that if this be not he, they would look for another. We must not be weary of looking for him that is to come. If they are convinced that this is he, they will look for no other. John had said, I am not the Christ, John 1. 20. Some think that John sent this question

for his own satisfaction. Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief. Troubles for Christ, especially when long unrelieved, sometimes prove too hard to be borne up against. The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation, call in question the most fundamental truths. Will the Lord cast off for ever? But we hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, only he desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Others think that John sent his disciples to Christ for their satisfaction. Though he was a prisoner, they loved him, and would not leave him. They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith, and needed instruction and confirmation. It is evident that John's disciples were not in general fully satisfied concerning Jesus; John seems therefore to have intended to procure them some decisive testimony from Jesus himself. Patience in a sick room or a prison may as much glorify God as the most active services. When we cannot do what we would, we should attempt as we can, to direct the judgments and confirm the faith of those who regard our words. The strong ought to consider the infirmities of the weak, and such as we cannot help ourselves, we should send to those that can. Ministers' business is to direct every body to Christ. And those who would know the certainty of the doctrine of Christ, must apply themselves to him, who is come to give an understanding. Those who would grow in grace must inquire. Men generally allow that the Saviour is come, and that they look for no other, yet alas how few accept his salvation.

Christ points them to what they heard and saw. Our senses may and ought to be appealed to in things that are their proper objects. Therefore the popish doctrine of Christ's presence in a wafer, agrees not with the truth as it is in Jesus; for Christ refers us to the things we hear and see.

Go and tell John. What you see of the power of Christ's miracles is to be considered as the acts of Divine power. The doctrine they are affixed to must be of God, for his power will never contradict his truth. Also as the accomplishment of a Divine prediction. Now if the works of Christ agree with the words of the prophet, Isa. 35. 5, 6, as it is plain they do, then no doubt but this is our God whom we have waited for.

Tell him what you hear of the preaching of his gospel, which accompanies his miracles. Faith, though confirmed by seeing, comes by hearing. The poor have the gospel preached to them.

Among the heathen philosophers it was a maxim, that the common people had no concern with religious truths. And learned men among the Jews avowed the impious tenet, that the grace of God would not descend upon the poor, and that poverty was a mark of reprobation.—(100.) Christ's gracious condescensions and compassions to the poor, are an evidence that it was he that should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God.

Christ's doctrine is gospel indeed; good news to those truly humbled in sorrow for their sins, and truly humble in the denial of self. The poor receive the gospel. The wonderful efficacy of the gospel is a proof of its Divine original. The poor are wrought upon by it.

Those things which men see and hear, if compared diligently with the scriptures, direct to the true religion, and determine in what way salvation is to be found. Though outward miracles are no longer wrought, yet the effects produced by the preaching of the gospel, in opening the eyes, directing the walk, delivering from the power of sin and Satan, prove it is the power of God; while the contempt of the worldly wise and self-righteous, forms an additional proof of the truth of scripture, for men are apt to be offended with the preachers and professors of the gospel now, as formerly with the lowly estate of the Redeemer: proud and carnal prejudices are still contradicted by the gospel.

Christ pronounces a blessing on those not offended in him, ver. 6. The strictness of his doctrine, the contradiction it gives to flesh and blood, the sufferings that attend the profession of his name; these things keep many from him, who cannot but see much of God in him. Blessed are they—the expression intimates, that it is difficult to conquer these prejudices, and dangerous not to conquer them; but those, who, notwithstanding this opposition, do believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more to praise, and honour, and glory.

§ 39. Ver. 7—15. *Christ's testimony to John the Baptist.*

What Christ said concerning John, was intended not only for his praise, but for the people's profit; to revive the remem-

brance of John's ministry which had been well attended, but which was now strangely forgotten. Now consider, what went ye out into the wilderness to see? If his preaching was worth taking so much pains to hear, surely it was worth taking some care to recollect. The greater the difficulties we have broken through to hear the word, the more we are concerned to profit by it. Christ puts it to them, What went ye out to see? They went rather to see and be seen, than to learn and be taught; to have something to talk of, than to be made wise to salvation. Those who attend on the word will be called to an account, what their improvements were. Do we think when the sermon is done, the care is over? No, then the greatest of the care begins. It will shortly be asked, What business had you such a time at such an ordinance? What brought you thither? Was it custom or company? or was it a desire to honour God and get good? What have you brought thence? what knowledge, and grace, and comfort? What went you to see?

The commendation of John was, he was a firm, resolute man, and not a reed shaken with the wind; but remarkable for his steadiness and constant consistency with himself. He was a self-denying man, and mortified to this world. His mien and habit showed that he was dead to all the pomps of the world, and the pleasures of sense. Those who have lived a life of mortification, are least likely to be driven off from their religion by persecution. He was not a man clothed in soft raiment; such there are, but they are in kings' houses. It becomes people, in all their appearances, to be consistent with their character and their situation. Far more of such raiment now appears in worshipping assemblies than is consistent with scripture precepts, the glory of God, the good of others, or the prosperity of souls.

The ministry of John was the beginning of the gospel, as it is reckoned. Though the obligation of the law of Moses was not removed till Christ's death, yet the discoveries of the old testament began to be superseded by the more clear manifestation of the kingdom of heaven as at hand. All the prophets, and Moses in the law, by types and express predictions, foretold the coming of the Messiah as a future event, but John declared his coming

to be at hand, and even pointed him out as already come. Their prophecies of a Christ to come, became out of date, when John said, He is come.

He was the same that was predicted to be Christ's forerunner. Herein some of Christ's honour was put upon him, that the old testament prophets spake and wrote of him. His business was to prepare Christ's way, to dispose people to receive the Saviour, by discovering to them their sin and misery, and their need of a Saviour. The nearer any are to Christ, the more truly honourable they are.

Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. John was a great and good man, but he was yet in a state of infirmity and imperfection; therefore came short of glorified saints, and the spirits of just men made perfect. The least saint in heaven knows more, loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. But by the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel dispensation in the perfection of its power and purity, and of the apostles and ministers of the new testament, the evangelical prophets. And the comparison between them and John, is not with respect to their personal sanctity, but to their office. John preached Christ coming, but they preached Christ not only come, but crucified and glorified. John came at the dawning of the gospel day, and therein excelled the foregoing prophets, but he was taken off before the noon of that day, before the rending of the veil, before Christ's death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit; so that the least of the apostles and evangelists, having greater discoveries made to them, and being employed in a greater embassy, is greater than John. John did no miracles, the apostles wrought many. The ground of this superiority is laid in the preference of the new testament dispensation to that of the old testament. Ministers of the new testament excel, because their ministration does so, 2 Cor. 3. 6, &c. All the true greatness of men is derived from, and denominated by the gracious manifestation of Christ to them. What reason have we to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the kingdom of heaven, under such advantages of light and love!

The great commendation of John the Baptist was, that God owned his ministry.

and made it wonderfully successful in preparing the people for the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The meaning of this we have in the parallel place, Luke 16. 16. Multitudes are wrought upon by the ministry of John, and become his disciples. And those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders. The publicans and harlots believed John, whom the scribes and pharisees rejected, and so went into the kingdom of God before them, while they trifled. It is a great commendation of the gospel, that it has brought many to holiness who were very unlikely ever to be partakers of its blessings.

This violence denotes a strength and earnestness in those who followed John's ministry. It shows us also what fervency and zeal are required of all. Those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven, must strive to enter. Self must be denied; the bent, the frame and temper of the mind must be altered; there is a force to be put upon the corrupt nature. The violent take it by force. Those who will have an interest in the great salvation, will have it upon any terms, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing, Gen. 32. 26. Those who will make their calling and election sure must give diligence. The kingdom of heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of those that labour. It is a blessed sight; O that we could see a greater number, not with angry contention, thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with holy contention, thrusting themselves into it!

Those will surely succeed who are determined to find admission; those will surely come short who postpone the concerns of their souls to their worldly interests, pleasures, and diversions, or seek salvation any other way than by repentance towards God, and faith in his beloved Son. To Him both Moses and the prophets bear witness, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

The concluding prophecy of the old testament was, Behold I will send you Elias, Mal. 4. 5, 6. Christ speaks of it as a great truth, that John the Baptist is the Elias of the new testament; not Elias in his own person, as the carnal Jews expected; but one that should come in the spirit and power of Elias; like him in temper and

conversation, that should press repentance, that should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. He speaks of it as a truth, which would not be easily apprehended by those who expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. Gospel truths are, as they are received, a saviour of life or of death. Christ is a Saviour and John an Elias, to those who receive the truth concerning them.

Our Lord Jesus closes this discourse with a solemn demand of attention. If John be the Elias prophesied of, then certainly here is a great change at hand, the Messiah's kingdom is at the door. These are things which require serious consideration. The things of God are of great and common concern. God requires no more from us than the right use and improvement of the faculties he has already given us. He requires those to hear that have ears, those to use their reason that have reason. People are ignorant, not because they want power, but because they want will.

12. The meaning is. From the time that John explained the nature of the gospel dispensation, and invited men to accept its blessings, this declaration of truth and grace is eagerly received, and vast multitudes are, as it were, pressing forwards to the enjoyment of these benefits.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 39. Ver. 16—19. *The perverseness of the Jews.*

Having commended John, Christ condemns those who had him among them, and did not profit by his ministry. The more praiseworthy the minister is, the more blameworthy the people if they slight him. This our Lord Jesus sets forth in a parable. There is not a greater absurdity than that which those are guilty of who have good preaching among them, and are not the better for it.

He especially reflects on the scribes and pharisees, who had a proud conceit of themselves. To humble them he compares them to children—their behaviour to children's play. They resembled sullen children, who, being out of temper without reason, quarrel with all the attempts of their fellows to please them, or to induce them to join in diversions for which they used to assemble. Such a capricious and sullen disposition may be observed in children when determined to be displeased with every thing; yet in a matter of infinite importance, the men of that generation copied it. John Baptist came to them in an abstemious and austere manner, and they said he was melancholy, or possessed

with a devil. The Son of man came in a more free manner, but instead of being better pleased with his condescending courtesy, they called him a glutton and drunkard; and because he went among notorious sinners to reclaim them, they accused him of loving such company. But the Divine wisdom displayed in these appointments, would be perceived and approved by all taught of God.

Our Lord Jesus, by this freedom, did not condemn John, any more than John condemned him, though their deportment was very different. Though we are clear in the goodness of our own practice, yet we must not judge of others by it. There may be a great diversity of operations, where it is the same God that worketh all in all, 1 Cor. 12. 6; and this various manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, ver. 7. God's ministers are variously gifted.

The cavils of worldly men are often, at the same time, most trifling and most malignant. Their dislike to the message, leads them to object to the messengers. Something they have to urge against every one, however excellent and holy; being determined to be displeased, they put a bad construction on the best actions. They will censure every thing to excuse themselves from mourning for sin, or rejoicing before God. These are the children of unbelief and folly.

Never did any man live such a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, as Christ lived. He that was undefiled, and separate from sinners, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. The most unspotted innocence, and the most unparalleled excellence, will not always be a fence against the reproach of tongues; nay, a man's best gifts and best actions may be made the matter of his reproach. But wisdom is justified of her children. Christ is wisdom; in him are hid treasures of wisdom; the saints are the children God has given him, Heb. 2. 13. The gospel is wisdom, it is the wisdom from above; true believers are wise children, wise for their true interests.

§ 40. Ver. 20—24. *Christ's reflections on the perverseness of the Jews.*

Willful impenitence is the great damning sin of multitudes that enjoy the gospel, and which, more than any other, sinners will be upbraided with to eternity. The great doctrine that John the Baptist,

and Christ, and the apostles preached, was repentance. The great thing designed, was to prevail with people to change their minds and ways, to leave their sins and turn to God: this they would not be brought to. He does not say, Because they believed not; some kind of faith many had, that Christ was a Teacher come from God; but, Because they repented not—their faith did not prevail to the transforming of their hearts, and the reforming of their lives.

After having denounced a woe on Chorazin and Bethsaida, two cities in Galilee, whither he often resorted, Jesus declared, that if such miracles as they witnessed, had been wrought in Tyre and Sidon, two neighbouring cities of the Gentiles, noted for their wickedness, they would long before have repented and humbled themselves. Christ knew the hearts of the Jews were more hardened against his miracles and doctrines than those of Tyre and Sidon would have been; therefore their condemnation would be more intolerable. Though the damnation of all that perish will be intolerable, the misery of those who had the fullest and clearest discoveries made them of the power and grace of Christ, and who yet repented not, will be of all other the most intolerable. And Capernaum, the city where he had chiefly dwelt after he entered upon his public work, had been as it were exalted to heaven by extraordinary privileges, therefore they must expect a heavier doom than even the people of Sodom. The Lord exercises his absolute sovereignty, yet he punishes none more than they deserve, and never withholds the knowledge of the truth from those who long after it. We, who have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and the gospel ordinances administered to us, and live under the dispensation of the Spirit, have advantages not inferior to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the account in the great day will be accordingly.

21. "Woe unto thee," or, Alas for thee.—*Wakefield.* Our Lord uses it as an exclamation of pity and grief, not of anger and resentment.—*Campbell.*

§ 40. Ver. 25—30. *The gospel revealed to the simple. The heavy-laden invited.*

In all our approaches to God, by praise as well as by prayer, it is good for us to regard him as a Father, and to take hold upon that relation, not only when we ask for the mercies we want, but when we

give thanks for the mercies we have received. Mercies are doubly sweet, and powerful to enlarge the heart in praise, when they are received as tokens of a Father's love, and gifts of a Father's hand. It becomes children to be grateful. When we come to God as a Father, we must remember that he is Lord of heaven and earth, which obliges us to come to him with reverence, as to the sovereign Lord of all; and yet with confidence, as able to do for us whatever we need or can desire; to defend us from all evil, and to supply us with all good. His wisdom, justice, and goodness were worthy of all adoration and praise, in that he was pleased to conceal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from learned scribes and the wise men of the nation, while he revealed them to the poor and unlearned, to those who were despised for their ignorance and inexperience, but were teachable as children. The Jews had the scriptures in their hands, they saw his miracles, and heard his doctrine, but they were blinded by pride and prejudices. We can give no reason why Peter, a fisherman, should be made an apostle, and not Nicodemus, a pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, though he also believed in Christ; but so it seemed good in God's sight. Christ said this in the hearing of his disciples, to show them, that it was not for any merit of their own they were thus distinguished, but from God's good pleasure.

Our blessed Lord added a remarkable declaration, that the Father had delivered into his hands all power, authority, and judgment. There is perfect knowledge between the Father and the Son, nor could any man know the Father, excepting as the Son should reveal his nature and glory to him. This shows the Son to be coequal with the Father; and proves that those who reject the teaching of the Lord Jesus, cannot know any thing aright of that one true and living God, whom they profess to worship; so that he must know the most in this matter who sits at Christ's feet, with simplicity and teachableness, to hear and believe his words. It is a method by which self is abased, proud thoughts brought down, all flesh silenced, and Divine power and wisdom made to shine the more bright. See Cor. 1. 27, 31.

We are indebted to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father's

will and love ever since Adam sinned; there is no comfortable intercourse between a holy God and sinful man, but in and by a Mediator, John 14. 6.

Our Saviour having thus declared his power and authority, invited all that laboured and were heavy laden, to come unto him. In some senses all men are so, and none will come till they feel a burden. Worldly men burden themselves with fruitless cares and anxieties for wealth and honours; the dissipated and sensual labour in pursuit of their pleasures; the slave of Satan and his own lusts and passions, is the merest drudge on earth. The superstitious, and those who labour to establish their own righteousness, are equally burdened, and labour in vain. The convinced sinner is heavy laden with guilt and terror; the tempted and afflicted believer has his labours and burdens also. Christ invites all to come to him for rest to their souls. He alone gives this invitation; prophets, apostles, and ministers direct men to go to him. They come to him, when, feeling their own guilt, misery, and that they are unable to help themselves, and believing his love and power to help, they seek him in fervent prayer, and wait on him for the desired mercy.

Thus it is the duty and interest of weary and heavy laden sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to him, or in competition with him, we must accept of him as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to his conduct and government, and be desirous to be saved by him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. Come, and cast that burden upon him, under which thou art heavy laden. This is the gospel call, The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that is athirst come; whoever will, let him come. All who thus come will receive rest as Christ's gift, and obtain peace, satisfaction, and comfort in their hearts. But in coming to him they must take his yoke upon them, and submit to his authority as their Lord and Master. They must learn of him all things relating to their comfort, acceptance, and obedience. He does not govern with rigour, but rejects none willing to learn, for dulness; and accepts the willing servant, however imperfect the services. Here, then, men may find rest for their souls, and here only.

Jesus Christ will give assured rest to weary souls who by a lively faith come to

him; rest from the terror of sin, in a well-grounded peace of conscience; rest from the power of sin, in a regular order of the soul, and its due government of itself; rest in God and complacency of soul in his love, Ps. 116. 7. This is that rest which remains for the people of God, Heb. 4. 9, begun in grace, perfected in glory.

Nor need we fear his yoke. His commandments are the same with the moral law; that law is holy, just, and good, and obedience tends to happiness. As put by the Saviour upon the believer, it is deprived of its condemning power, it is enforced by encouragements and promises, made easy by Divine love, and the change wrought in the heart by regenerating grace. It requires self-denial, and exposes to difficulties in many cases, but this is abundantly repaid, even in this world, by inward peace and joy; having support from above, this yoke proves light, and is but for a moment. It is a yoke that is lined with love. Such is the nature of all Christ's commands, so reasonable in themselves, so profitable to us, and all summed up in one word, and that a sweet word—love. So powerful are the assistances he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. It is easy to the new nature, very easy to him that understandeth. Prov. 14. 6. It may be a little hard at first, but it is easy afterwards; the love of God and the hope of heaven make it easy. Though in itself not joyous, but grievous; yet as Christ's it is light. Paul knew as much of it as any, and he calls it a light affliction, 2 Cor. 4. 17. God's presence, Isa. 43. 2, Christ's sympathy, Isa. 63. 9, Dan. 3. 25, and especially the Spirit's aids and comforts, 2 Cor. 1. 5, make suffering for Christ light and easy. As afflictions abound, and are prolonged, consolations abound, and are prolonged also. Let this therefore reconcile us to the difficulties, and help us over the discouragements we may meet, both in doing-work and suffering-work.

We must come to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, and so learn of Christ, as to learn Christ, Eph. 4. 20; for he is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way, and All in All. He is meek, and can have compassion on the ignorant. He is lowly in heart. He stoops to the meanest capacities. Who teaches like him? This humility and meekness, as it qualifies him

to be a teacher, so it will be the best qualification of those who are to be taught by him; for the meek will be guide in judgment, Ps. 25. 9.

Rest for the soul is the most desirable. The only way, and a sure way to find rest for our souls is, to sit at Christ's feet and hear his word. The way of duty is the way of rest. The understanding finds rest in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and is there abundantly satisfied. The truths Christ teaches are such as we may venture our souls upon. The affections find rest in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and meet with that in them which gives abundant satisfaction, quietness, and assurance for ever. And those satisfactions will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven, where we shall see and enjoy God immediately, shall see him as he is, and enjoy him as he is ours. This rest is to be had with Christ for all those who learn of him.

Such is the Redeemer's mercy; and why should the labouring and burdened sinner seek for rest from any other quarter? Let us come to him daily for deliverance from wrath and guilt, from sin and Satan, from all our cares, fears, and sorrows. Let us learn of him as our Prophet, rely on him as our Priest, bear his yoke as our King, and copy his example of meekness and lowliness of heart. Whatever impiety or unbelief may object, whatever the devil, the world, or the flesh may suggest, we shall find his yoke easy, and his burden light, his service perfect freedom, and rest to our souls; in keeping his commandments there is great reward.

Discern hence the difference between the religion of the gospel, and the formal worship many are contented with, in which the heart has no place. Remember, that unless you love God, you cannot please him. Many sins may be avoided, and duties performed, from motives and principles not derived from his word, or conformable to it. But constrained obedience, far from being easy and light, is a heavy burden. In vain do you draw near to Jesus with your lips, while your heart is far from him. Then come to Jesus to find rest for your souls. And believers, rejoice in your security! The Lord has given you a never-dying principle of love, and has provided for you a never-failing supply of grace. These will bear you up through all your journey, and at last bring you safely home to the man-

sions provided for you in your Father's house. Then shall you praise him, world without end.—(51.)

## CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1-8.	M. 2. 23-28.	L. 6. 1-5.
Ver. 9-16.	M. 3. 1-12.	L. 6. 6-11.
Ver. 23-37.	M. 3. 22-30.	L. 11. 14-23.
Ver. 38-45.		L. 11. 24-32.
Ver. 46-50.	M. 3. 31-35.	L. 8. 19-21.

§ 33. Ver. 1-8. *Jesus vindicates his disciples for plucking corn on the sabbath-day.*

Our Lord Jesus here teaches, that works of necessity and mercy are lawful on the sabbath-day, at which the Jews in many instances were taught to scruple. Christ's explanation of the fourth commandment intimates its perpetual obligation to the religious observation of one day in seven, as a holy sabbath. He would not expound a law that was immediately to expire, but doubtless intended hereby to settle a point which would be of use to his church in all ages; and so it is to teach us, that our christian sabbath, though under the direction of the fourth commandment, is not under the injunctions of the Jewish elders.

Christ, by justifying his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, shows that works of necessity are lawful on that day. Being in the corn-fields, they began to pluck the ears of corn; the law of God allowed this, Deut. 23. 25. This was but slender provision for Christ and his disciples; but it was the best they had, and they were content with it. The pharisees did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, but for doing it on the sabbath-day. Plucking and rubbing the ears of corn on that day was forbidden by the tradition of the elders, because it was a kind of reaping. It is no new thing for the most harmless actions of Christ's disciples to be evil spoken of, and reflected upon as unlawful, especially by those who are zealous for their own inventions and impositions. Professors, who are most destitute of the spirit of godliness, often are the most tenacious of forms, especially when they can use them to support their own authority and credit.

The disciples could say little for themselves; but Christ came to free his followers, not only from the corruptions of the pharisees, but from their unscriptural impositions, and therefore justified what they did. He urged an ancient instance of David, who in a case of necessity did

that which otherwise he ought not to have done, 1 Sam. 21. 6. That which bore out David in eating the shew-bread was not his dignity, but his hunger. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, but the meanest shall have their wants considered. Christ also urges a daily instance of the priests in the temple, who did servile work on the sabbath-day; killing the sacrificed beasts, which in a common case would have been profaning the sabbath; and yet it never was reckoned so, because the temple-service required it. Those labours are lawful on the sabbath-day which are necessary, not only to the support of life, but to the service of the day. Sabbath-rest is to promote, not to hinder sabbath-worship. Needful provision for our health and food is to be made; but when servants are kept at home, and families rendered a scene of hurry and confusion on the Lord's day to furnish a feast for visitants, or for social indulgence, the case is very different. Such things as these, and many others common among professors, are to be censured.

Christ justifies the disciples by several arguments.

1. In this place is one greater than the temple, ver. 6. If the temple-service would justify what the priests did in their ministration, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in attendance upon him. If whatever we do, we do it in the name of Christ, and as unto him, it shall be graciously accepted of God, however it may be censured and cavilled at by men.

2. God will have mercy and not sacrifice, ver. 7. Ceremonial duties must give way to moral; the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation, must take place of ritual observances. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man's good, Deut. 5. 14. No law must be construed so as to contradict its own end.

3. The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day, ver. 8. It was by the Son that God made the world, and by him he instituted the sabbath in innocency. By him he gave the commandments at mount Sinai, and as Mediator he is intrusted with the institution of ordinances; and particularly, as being Lord of the sabbath, he was authorized to alter that day, so that it should become the Lord's day, the Lord Christ's day. If Christ be the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and the work of it should be dedicated to him.



1. The original here does not imply a connexion of events by the regular order of time, but a departure from it, marking a transition between two different and distant events.—*Valpy*.

3. Our Lord, in this chapter, exposes the errors of the rabbis among the pharisees, who had made many burdensome distinctions relative to the actions they deemed lawful or unlawful on the sabbath day. *Lightfoot* cites passages from the Jewish writers, which show that plucking ears of corn on the sabbath was expressly forbidden.

§ 34. Ver. 9-13. *Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the sabbath.*

Christ, by healing the man that had the withered hand on the sabbath-day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day.

To inquire into the lawfulness or unlawfulness of actions is very good, and we cannot apply ourselves with such inquiries more fitly than to Christ; but the pharisees asked, not to be instructed by him, but that they might accuse him. To such superstition had the pharisees brought the sabbath-rest, that, unless in peril of life, they allowed not any medicinal operations on the sabbath-day. Christ answered by an appeal to themselves. In case a sheep, though but one, the loss of which would not be very great, should fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, would they not lift it out? No doubt they might do it; and man, in respect of his being, is a great deal better, and more valuable than the best of the brute creatures. They do not consider this, who are more solicitous for the education, preservation, and supply of their horses and dogs than of God's poor, or perhaps of their own household. It must be allowed to be consistent with the Divine law, to perform actions of mercy and love on the sabbath-day, which are good, and adorn religion.

Hence Christ infers a truth, that it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days; and let any one judge whether healing was not doing well. There are more ways of doing well upon sabbath-days, than by the duties of God's immediate worship: attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who need speedy relief; these are doing good: and these must be done from a principle of love and charity, with humility, self-denial, and a heavenly frame of spirit; these are doing well, and shall be accepted, Gen. 4. 7.

This, as other cures Christ wrought, had a spiritual significance. 1. By nature our hands are withered, we are utterly unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good. 2. It is Christ only, by the power of his grace, who cures us, he heals the

withered hand by putting life into the dead soul, works in us both to will and to do.

3. In order to our cure, he commands us to stretch forth our hands, to do as well as we can; to stretch them out in prayer to God, to stretch them out to lay hold on Christ by faith, to stretch them out in holy endeavours. Now this man could not stretch forth his withered hand of himself, any more than the impotent man could arise and carry his bed, or Lazarus come forth out of his grave; yet Christ bid him do it. God's commands to us to do the duty, which of ourselves we are not able to do, may be likened unto this command to the man with the withered hand, to stretch it forth; for with the command, there is a promise of grace given by the word. Those who perish are as inexcusable as this man would have been, if he had not attempted to stretch forth his hand, and so had not been healed. But those saved, are as much indebted to the power and grace of Christ as he was.

The Lord's day is especially the time for healing the souls of men; and while the helpless sinner hears the voice of Christ, and endeavours to obey it, he feels and shows that he has received power to do those things of which before he was utterly incapable.

§ 34. Ver. 14-21. *The malice of the pharisees.*

The pharisees not being able to answer our Lord's reasoning, enraged at being put to shame, and anxious for their authority and traditions, took counsel to find some plausible accusation that he might be condemned to death. Jesus, aware of their design, as his time was not come, retired from that place; yet as great multitudes followed him, he healed all the sick that were brought unto him, charging them not to speak of his miracles, nor to let the pharisees know where he was. This was done that he might fulfil the words of the prophet Isaiah concerning him, Isa. 42. 1-4. The compassionate, condescending, and kind nature of Christ's miracles are there described; his personal ministry, and persevering in the midst of opposition without disputation, with the general effects and success of his gospel, and his kind, tender dealing with weak and tempted believers in all ages, is described.

Surely face does not more exactly answer to face in water, than the character of Christ drawn by the prophet, to his

temper and conduct as described by the evangelists. Let us with cheerful confidence commit our souls to so kind and faithful a hand. Far from breaking, he will strengthen the bruised reed; far from quenching the smoking flax, he will rather blow it up into a flame. Let us lay aside all unnecessary contentions and angry debates; let us receive one another as Christ receiveth us. So may we best hope that the cause of religion will go on successfully around us. The Gentiles now trust in a Redeemer's name. May our souls, with humble submission, bow to receive it, and observe it with such obedient regards, that our example may promote its reception.—(80.)

And while we take encouragement from the gracious kindness of our Lord, we should pray that his Spirit may rest upon us also, and enable us to copy his example. Thus should we try to strengthen the hands that hang down, and to confirm the feeble knees, and so look to him, for ourselves and for others, to bring forth judgment unto victory, and expect the time when all the Gentiles shall trust in his name, and wait for his law.

20. "A dimly-burning taper, he will not quench."—*Campbell*. Flax was used for the wicks of lamps. Smoking flax is the expiring wick of a lamp, which, when near going out, yields smoke more than light.

§ 42. Ver. 22—30. *Jesus heals a demoniac.*

This poor man that was possessed with a devil, was blind and dumb; a miserable case! he could neither see to help himself, nor speak to others to help him. A soul, under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing to the purpose. Satan blinds the eye of faith, and seals up the lips of prayer. The conquering and dispossessing of Satan is the healing of souls. And the cause being removed, immediately the effect ceased.

The pharisees pretended to more knowledge in the Divine law and zeal for it, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. When they heard the people say, Is not this the Son of David? they were more irritated than at the miracle itself. The more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vilify him. They could not deny that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny it was supernatural. And no surmise could be more palpably false and

vile than theirs: that he, who is Truth itself, should combine with the father of lies to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge, of an obstinate unbelief, resolved to stand out against the clearest conviction. Observe, among the devils there is a prince, the leader of the apostasy from God, and of rebellion against him; but this prince is Beelzebub—the god of a fly, the lord of a dunghill! How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an angel of light to be a lord of flies!

Jesus knew their thoughts. Many are kept from their duty by what they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ. Probably the pharisees had whispered what they thought among themselves, to help to harden one another; but Christ's reply was to their thoughts, he knew with what mind, and from what principle they said it.

Christ reasoned on the evident effects of his doctrines and example, to render men wise and holy, to deliver them from the power of Satan, and make them servants of God. It was evident that if Satan aided Jesus in casting out devils, the infernal kingdom was divided against itself, how then could it subsist?

Our Lord subjoined another argument. There were exorcists, whose employ it was to drive out the evil spirits. They were countenanced by the pharisees, and if they insisted that Jesus cast out devils by the prince of the devils, they could not prove that their children cast them out by any other power. But if they ascribed their own exorcisms to the power of God, how could they doubt that his works were from God, when they were so greatly superior, and his life and doctrines so holy? And if he, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God was come; he was the promised Messiah, and if they rejected him, it was at their peril. There are two great interests in the world; and when unclean spirits are cast out by the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of sinners to a life of faith and obedience, the kingdom of God is come unto us. All who do not aid and rejoice in such a change are against Christ. We must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side: it is the right side.

Christ's errand into the world was to gather in those whom the Father had given him. Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they do all they

can, in their places, to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest.

§ 42. Ver. 31, 32. *Blasphemy of the pharisees.*

Here is a gracious assurance of the pardon of all sin upon gospel terms; this Christ says to us, and it is a comfortable saying, that the greatness of sin shall be no bar to our acceptance with God, if we truly repent and believe the gospel. All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Even words spoken against the Son of man shall be forgiven. Christ herein has set an example to all the sons of men, to be ready to forgive words spoken against them.

They shall be forgiven *unto men*. Here perhaps is a comparison of the happy situation of men under a dispensation of mercy, with that of apostate angels for whom there is no forgiveness.

There is an exception of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which is here declared to be the only unpardonable sin. This is a sin that exposes the sinner both to temporal and eternal punishment, both to present wrath and the wrath to come. It is not all speaking against the Holy Ghost, or some of his operations, or merely the resisting of his internal working in the sinner himself, that is here meant; for who then should be saved?

This blasphemy is excepted, not for any defect of mercy in God, or of merit in Christ, but because it inevitably leaves the sinner in infidelity and impenitence. Scarcely any passage in scripture has been more made an occasion of discouragement to weak christians than this. Humble and conscientious believers at times are tempted to think they have committed the unpardonable sin, while those who have come the nearest to it, seldom have any fears about it; and many interpretations that have been given tend to increase the difficulties. We may be sure that those who indeed repent and believe the gospel, have not committed this sin, or any other of the same kind; for repentance and faith are inseparably connected with forgiveness, and they are the special gift of God, which he would not bestow on any man if he were determined never to pardon him. Thus we have reason to think, that none are guilty of this sin, who believe that Christ is the Son of God, and sincerely desire to have part in his merit and mercy; and those who fear they have committed this sin, give a good sign that they have not.

Our Lord said these words to the pharisees, who had spoken most blasphemously against him and his miracles, which were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, but not under the immediate dispensation of the Spirit. Yet their case was not absolutely desperate, and one further method would be used to convince them. In a short time Christ would be crucified, rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, from whence he would send the Holy Spirit upon his apostles and disciples, enabling them to perform wondrous works, in proof of their testimony concerning his resurrection and ascension. He who should blaspheme this last attestation to Jesus as the Messiah, and, from determined enmity to him and his kingdom, ascribe these operations of the Holy Spirit to Satan, would be given up to impenitence, and thus sink into final perdition. So that none could commit this sin who did not witness the effects of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the apostles. There are, however, other ways in which men sin against the clearest evidence of the truth, and even against their own consciences, till they provoke God to give them up to impenitence; but him that cometh unto Christ, he will in no wise cast out. The trembling contrite sinner has the witness in himself that this is not his case.

§ 42. Ver. 33—37. *Evil words proceed from an evil heart.*

Our Lord next showed the pharisees his knowledge of the evil of their hearts. They were proud, carnal, malicious, ungodly men, yet they pretended to piety. Let them either seek the renewal of their souls to holiness by the grace of God, or let them give up their pretensions to religion. Let the heart be sanctified, and it will appear in our words. The heart is the root, the language is the fruit; if the nature of the tree be good, it will bring forth fruit accordingly. Men's language discovers what country they are of, so likewise what manner of spirit they are of. Unless the heart be transformed, the life will never be thoroughly reformed.

The heart also is the fountain, words are the streams. A troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring, must send forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Evil words are the natural, genuine product of an evil heart. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify

the corrupt communication. This they wanted; they were evil, and how could they, being evil, speak good things? What could be expected from vipers, but what is poisonous and malignant?

The heart is the treasury, the words are the things brought out of that treasury; and from hence men's characters may be drawn, and may be judged of. Graces, comforts, experiences, good knowledge, good affections, good resolutions, these are a good treasure in the heart. The word of God hidden there, the law of God written there, Divine truths dwelling and ruling there, are a treasure there, kept ready for use upon all occasions. A good man, thus furnished, will be speaking and doing that which is good. Some pretend to have a good treasure within, but give no proof of it; faith without works is dead: and some have a good treasure of wisdom and knowledge, but do not bring forth out of it. It is the character of an evil man, that he has an evil treasure in his heart, and out of it bringeth forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions dwelling and reigning in the heart, are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to the dishonour of God, and the hurt of others. But treasures of wickedness will be treasures of wrath, Prov. 10. 2.

Christ shows what evil there is in idle words; much more in such wicked words as the pharisees spoke. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that it may be a check upon our tongues. God takes notice of every word we say, even that which we ourselves do not notice. See Ps. 139. 4. There is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it. Sin is seldom wanting in the multitude of words, unprofitable talk, Job 15. 3. If we repent not of our idle words, and our account for them be not blotted out by the blood of Christ, we are undone. The constant tenour of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not, will be evidence for or against us at the great day. Those who seemed to be religious, but bridled not their tongues, will be found to have deceived themselves with a vain religion, Jam. 1. 26. Let us, then, keep constant watch over ourselves, that we may speak such words as are consistent with the christian character, and in the day of judgment may prove our faith in and love to Christ.

24. The original is Beelzebul. See note 10. 25.  
27. We learn from some passages of scripture, from Josephus and the fathers, that there were some among the Jews who professed to cast out devils by exorcisms. Whether they were successful or not, the argument is the same; the pharisees thought that it was done, and did not impute it to the power or assistance of Satan.

31. Orme considers that this blasphemy was not a crime charged upon the pharisees by our Lord, but one against which they were warned. He impressed upon them the guilt of their conduct towards him, their habit of opposing the work of God, and the danger to which they would soon be exposed, of calumniating the Holy Spirit and resisting the completed evidence of the Saviour's character, which would render them incapable of forgiveness in this world, and in that which is to come.—"Shall be forgiven," or rather, may be forgiven, according to the Hebrew idiom.

With respect to *dejected minds*, let it be observed, that no person, let his crimes have been what they may, if he be grieved at heart for having committed them, and sincerely ask forgiveness in the name of Christ, need to fear that he shall be rejected. Such grief is itself a proof that he has not committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, because it is a mark of that sin to be accompanied with a hard and impenitent heart. Such characters may feel the remorse of a Cain, a Saul, or a Judas; but a tear of godly sorrow never dropped from their eyes.—*A. Fuller.*

32. Some have defended the doctrine of purgatory from this passage. The word here translated "world;" is sometimes used in scripture to signify age; and the expression here used was often applied by the Jews to signify their own dispensation and that of the Messiah. The meaning of the passage, however, is made clear by reference to Mark 3. 29.

33. "Pernicious, false, or calumnious words." In the meaning of idle it is applicable only to persons. But this remark is not intended to convey that vain and unedifying words are not sinful, and consequently not to be brought into judgment. See Eph. 5. 4.

§ 43. Ver. 38—45. *The scribes and pharisees reproved for seeking a sign.*

It was highly unreasonable to demand a sign, when Christ had already given so many, that abundantly proved him sent of God. It is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that an excuse for not submitting to him. Christ condemns the demand, as the language of an evil generation, and refused to give them any other sign than he had already given them, but that of the prophet Jonah. Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humours. Those who ask amiss, ask and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief. The resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here

the sign of the prophet Jonah, was the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. 1. 4. This sign of the prophet Jonah he further explains. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and then came out again, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then rise again.

Christ takes this occasion to represent the character and condition of that generation, a generation that would not be reformed, and therefore could not but be ruined. He gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day. Persons and things now appear under false colours; if we would make a right estimate, we must take our measures from the last judgment; things are really, what they are eternally.

The Ninevites would shame the Jews for not repenting; the queen of Sheba, for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is infinitely greater than Solomon. She had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ. Solomon was not more than a wise man, but Christ is Wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; we have no such cares to hinder us, and we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties. She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us. Behold he stands at the door, and knocks. She could only hear Solomon's wisdom; but Christ will give wisdom to those who come to him; so that, upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon.

As that generation resolved to continue in the possession, and under the power of Satan, notwithstanding all the methods used to dispossess him and rescue them, they are compared to one out of whom the devil has gone, but returns with double force. The application of the parable makes it represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation. The powers

of darkness, disturbed by the doctrines and miracles of Christ, would for a time recede from among the Jews, and seek rest among the Gentiles—those dry lands where no water of life hitherto had been found, Ps. 63. 1; Isa. 35. 6, 7; 41. 18. Being pursued by the successful preaching of the gospel, and finding no rest there, they would return to repossess the Jews, and meeting with no opposition or hinderance, would again take possession of them, who thus would become more hardened than before. In this view, it is a prophecy of the rejection of the Jews, and their awful state of enmity to the gospel, to this day.

This parable is also applicable to the case of individuals who hear the word of God, and are in part reformed, but not truly converted. The unclean spirit indeed retires for a time, but Christ is not permitted to dwell in the heart by faith; the habitation is empty; when the evil spirit returns he finds Christ is not there to exclude him; it is swept by outward reformation, but garnished by a preparation of heart to comply with evil suggestions, and the man becomes a more declared enemy of the truth than before. Then let none rely on convictions, forms, or mere outward reformation; every heart is the residence of unclean spirits, those excepted which are become the temples of the Holy Ghost, by faith in Christ.

39. *Lightfoot* observes that where Christ referred them to the sign of Jonah, he gave them a reproach, implying that as the heathen Ninevites were converted after Jonah was restored from the fish, so the Gentiles were to be converted after his return from the heart of the earth; a doctrine they could not endure.—Or, "race of people."—*A. Clarke*.

40. It was the custom of the orientals to reckon any part of a day for a whole day. They had no word to express a natural day of twenty-four hours. To say a thing happened after three days and three nights was the same as after three days, or, on the third day.—*T. H. Horne*. The word rendered whale is a general name for any huge fish or sea monster.—See notes on Jonah.

§ 45. Ver. 46—50. *The disciples of Christ his nearest relations.*

Christ's preaching was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to the capacity and case of his hearers. He left off talking with the pharisees, but continued to talk to the common people, who, not having such conceit of their knowledge as the pharisees, were willing to learn.

His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring

to hear him. Frequently, those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace are most negligent. We are apt to neglect that which we think we may have any day, forgetting that to-morrow is not ours.

They not only would not hear Jesus themselves, but they interrupted others that heard him gladly. The devil had sought to baffle Christ's discourse by the cavils of the scribes and pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off, by the unseasonable visits of relations. We often meet with hinderances and obstructions in our work, by our friends that are about us, and are taken off by civil respects from our spiritual concerns. Those who really wish well to us and to our work, may sometimes, by indiscretion, prove impediments to us in our duty. The mother of our Lord *desired* to speak with him; it seems she had not then learned to *command* her Son, as the idolatry of the church of Rome has since pretended to teach her.

He was so intent upon his work, that no natural or civil respect should take him from it. Not that under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents or unkind to relations; but the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done.

Christ would rather profit his disciples, than please his relations. Observe the description of Christ's disciples. They are such as do the will of his Father; not only hear it, and know it, and talk of it, but do it. He came not to seek or do his own will, distinct from his Father's; his will and his Father's are the same; but he refers us to his Father's will, because now in his present state and work he referred himself to it, John 6. 38.

All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, converses freely with them as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing which is fit for them, and will have them all with him at last; he will confess them before men and angels, and before his heavenly Father.

Whatever is peculiar in the affection or regard of the dearest relations of life, all centre in the love of Christ to his true disciples, yea, to the poorest and weakest

of them. Whatever could be desired or expected from a relative advanced to the highest earthly dignity and power, and infinitely more, may be expected from Christ. Let us then cease from men, and cleave to Him; let us look upon every christian, in whatever condition of life, as the brother, sister, or mother of the Lord of glory, let us love, respect, and be kind to them, for his sake, and after his example.

46. In the Hebrew idiom, other near relatives are often styled brothers.—*Campbell*.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1—23. M. 4. 1—20. L. 8. 4—15.  
Ver. 31.—34. M. 4. 30—34.  
Ver. 53—58. M. 6. 1—6.

§49. Ver. 1—23. *The parable of the sower, and the interpretation of it.*

As the multitudes increased, Jesus left the house, and went to the sea-side, and entered into a boat that he might be the less pressed, and better heard by the people. By this he teaches us in the outward circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences which God in his providence allots to us.

We have here the general reason why Christ taught in parables. Thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to those willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant.

Those who in humble faith take Christ as their Teacher, by attending to his word and the instructions of his Spirit, alone will attain this knowledge; and they will receive further communications of every blessing of salvation, seeking them from Christ, or they never can be obtained.

Some were willingly ignorant, ver. 13. There are many that see the gospel light, and hear the gospel sound, but it never reaches their hearts, nor has it any place in them. It is just with God to take away the light from those who shut their eyes against it; that such as will be ignorant, may be so: and God's dealing thus with them magnifies his distinguishing grace to his disciples.

Now in this the scripture would be fulfilled. It is quoted from Isa. 6. 9, 10. The prophet who spoke most plainly of gospel grace foretold the contempt of it, and the consequences of that contempt. That which was spoken of the sinners in

Isaiah's time, was fulfilled in those in Christ's time, and it is fulfilling every day.

The disciples, notwithstanding their remaining ignorance and prejudices, had been taught of God to see and hear many things relative to the kingdom of God; thus their ears and eyes were blessed by a sanctifying influence, ver. 17. Their situation was very favourable. Many prophets and righteous persons had desired to see the times in which they lived, and the miracles they witnessed, and to hear the Messiah's instructions which they received. Under the christian dispensation we all enjoy that blessed light, and hear that joyful sound; and if we make a proper use of our advantages, more and more knowledge and wisdom will be given to us.

The parable of the sower is plain. The exposition we have from Christ himself. The seed sown is the word of God, here called the word of the kingdom; it is a law by which we must be ruled and judged. This word is the seed sown, which seems a dead, dry thing, but the product is virtually in it. The sower that scatters the seed is our Lord Jesus Christ, either by himself, or by his ministers. Preaching to a multitude is sowing the corn; we know not where it will light; only see the ground be good, and give it seed enough. Some sort of ground, take ever so much pains with it, yet brings forth no fruit to any purpose, while the good soil brings forth plentifully. So it is with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here represented by four sorts of ground, of which three are bad, and but one good.

1. Observe what hearers are compared to highway ground; such as hear the word, and take no heed to it, take no hold of it; they do not come with any design to get good, as the pathway was never intended to be sown. Such mindless, careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; *who, as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word, if we take not care to keep it; as the birds pick up the seed that falls on the ground that is neither ploughed before, nor harrowed after.* None more befriended his design than heedless hearers, who think of something else, when they should think of things that belong to their peace.

2. The stony ground represents the case of hearers, who receive some good impressions of the word, but they are not

lasting. It is possible we may be a great deal better than some others, and yet come short of heaven. Hearing the word, though ever so frequently, ever so gravely, if we rest in that, will never bring us to heaven. They are quick in hearing, swift to hear; this seed sooner appeared above ground than that which was sown in the good soil. Hypocrites often get the start of true christians in the shows of profession. They receive it with joy. There are many who are very glad to hear a good sermon, but they do not profit by it. They may be pleased with the word, yet are not changed and ruled by it. They are told of free salvation, of the believer's privileges, and the happiness of heaven; and without any change of heart, without any abiding conviction of their own depravity, their need of a Saviour, or the excellence of holiness, they take a superficial view, and soon arrive at an unwarranted assurance. But when some heavy trial must be sustained if they retain their religion, or some advantage may be had if they forsake it, not being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, as the only and the precious Saviour of perishing sinners, they renounce or disguise their profession, or turn to some easier system.

Many endure for a while, but not to the end, and so come short of the happiness which is promised to those only that persevere; they did run well, but something hindered them. They fell away, so that no fruit was brought to perfection; any more than the corn, which having no depth of earth from which to draw moisture, is scorched and withered by the heat of the sun. They have no root in themselves; no settled fixed principles in their judgments, no firm resolution in their wills, nor any rooted habits in their affections. It is possible there may be the green blade of profession, where yet there is not the root of grace; hardness prevails in the heart; they are not by faith united to Christ our root; they derive not from him, they depend not on him. Where there is not principle, though there be profession, we cannot expect perseverance.

Persecution is represented in the parable by the scorching sun; the same sun which warms and cherishes that which is well rooted, withers and burns up that which wants root. As the word of Christ, so the cross of Christ, is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death: the same tribulation which

drives some to apostasy and ruin, works for others a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Trials which shake some, confirm others, Phil. 1. 12. Observe how soon they fall away; a profession taken up without consideration, is commonly let fall without it.

3. The thorny ground. This represents the condition of those who do not quite cast off their profession, yet come short of any saving benefit by it; the good they gain by the word, being overcome by the things of this world. Prosperity destroys the word in the heart, as much as persecution; and more dangerously, because more silently: the stones spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit.

Now what are these choking thorns? The cares of this world. Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that deals much in them; they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, Heb. 6. 8. Worldly cares are great hinderances to our profiting by the word of God, and our proficiency in religion. They eat up that vigour of soul which should be spent in Divine things; divert us from duty, distract us in duty, quench the sparks of good affections, and burst the cords of good resolutions.

Also, the deceitfulness of riches. Those who by care and industry have raised estates, so that the danger which arises from care seems to be over, and they continue hearers of the word, yet are still in a snare, Jer. 5. 4, 5. It is hard for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven; they are apt to rely upon them, and take inordinate complacency in them; and this chokes the word as much as care did. It is not so much riches, as the deceitfulness of riches, that does the mischief: they cannot be said to be deceitful to us unless we put our confidence in them, then they choke the good seed.

The aim of such hearer is to serve two masters, but their great concern is about the world, they are eager for riches, for worldly reputation, or the pleasures of the world; religion is but a secondary concern to keep out the fear of hell, and to keep up the hope of heaven, or to maintain the good opinion of others. This especially is the great danger of professors engaged in business, or in times of outward peace;

many are thus deceived, and lose their own souls while attempting to gain more of this present world and its enjoyments.

4. The good ground. Good seed should always meet with good soil; such are good hearers of the word. Though there are many who receive the grace of God, and the word of his grace, in vain, yet God has a remnant by whom it is received to good purpose; for God's word shall not return empty, Isa. 55. 11.

What distinguished this good ground from the rest was fruitfulness. By this true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites—that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Christ says, So shall ye be my disciples, John 15. 8. He does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but there were none that prevailed to hinder its fruitfulness. Saints, in this world, are not perfectly free from the remains of sin; but happily are freed from the reign of it.

The hearers represented by the good ground understand, not only the sense and meaning of the words, but their own concern in them; they understand it as a man of business understands his business. God in his word deals with men in a rational way, and gains possession of the will, and affections, by opening the understanding; whereas Satan, who is a thief and a robber, comes not in by that door, but climbs up another way. Also, they are fruitful hearers, which is an evidence of their good understanding. We bear fruit, when the temper of our minds and the tenour of our lives are conformable to the gospel we have received, and we do as we are taught. But all are not alike fruitful; some are of greater attainments in knowledge and holiness than others. We should aim at the highest; but if the heart be honest, and the life agree with it, those who bring forth but thirty-fold shall be graciously accepted of God, and it will be fruit abounding to their account, for we are under grace, not under the law. Christ closes the parable with a solemn call to attention, ver. 9. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing the word of God, and let us especially look to ourselves, that we may ascertain what sort of hearers we are.

§ 49. Ver. 24—30, 36—43. *The parable of the tares.*

This parable represents the present and future state of the gospel church; Christ's



care of it, the devil's enmity against it, the mixture there is in it of good and bad in this world, and the separation between them in the other world. The disciples request their Master, Declare to us the parable of the tares. If any man lack instruction, let him ask it of God. For all that appears, Christ expounded the foregoing parable unasked, but for the exposition of this they ask him. The first light and the first grace are given without our asking, further degrees of both must be daily prayed for.

He that sows the good seed is the Son of man. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the field, the Lord of the harvest, the sower of good seed. Whatever good seed there is in the world, it all is owing to Christ. Ministers are instruments employed by him and under him, the success of their labours depends upon his blessing.

The world is Christ's field; whatever the devil has in the world is usurped: when Christ takes possession, he comes whose, right it is; it is his field; because it is his he took care to sow it with good seed.

The good seed are the children of the kingdom, true saints, not in profession only. This seed is scattered, dispersed, though in some places thicker sown than in others. The seed is that from which fruit is expected; what fruit of honour and service God has from this world he has from the saints.

The tares are the children of the wicked one. Hypocrites, and all profane and wicked people, are the children of the devil. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image, do his lusts, he rules over them, he works in them, Eph. 2.2; John 8.44. They are tares in this world; they do no good they do hurt, both by temptation and persecution. They have the same rain, and sunshine, and soil, as the good plants, but are good for nothing. God has so ordered it, that good and bad should be mixed together in this world, that the good may be exercised, the bad left inexcusable.

The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil; a sworn enemy to Christ and all that is good, to the glory of God, and the comfort and happiness of men. Ever since he became a wicked spirit, he has been industrious to promote wickedness.

Those slept, who, by their power and by their preaching, should have prevented

this mischief. Satan watches all opportunities to propagate vice and profaneness; we need to be sober and vigilant. It was in the night. Satan rules in the darkness of this world; that gives him opportunity to sow tares, Ps. 104. 20.

Observe, such is the proneness of fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may go his way, they will spring up of themselves, and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced.

The tares appeared not till the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit. There is much secret wickedness in the hearts of men, which is long hid under a plausible profession, but breaks out at last. As the good seed, so the tares, lie a great while under the clods and at first springing up, it is hard to distinguish them; but when a trying time comes, when fruit is to be brought forth, when good is to be done that has difficulty and hazard attending it, then you will discern between the sincere and the hypocrite; then you may say, This is wheat, and that is tares.

The servants complained to their master; Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not of Christ. Considering the seed which Christ sows, we may well ask, with wonder, Whence should these tares come? The rise of errors, the breaking out of scandals, and the growth of profaneness, are matter of great grief to all servants of Christ, especially faithful ministers.

The enemies of the gospel charge all wild opinions and enormities upon the truth itself, as if they grew from the seed Christ sows in his field; thus many are prejudiced and perish. But the servants know that they spring from a different seed, and often wonder, as well as grieve, to find tares where wheat is sown.

The master was aware whence it was. He does not blame the servants. The ministers of Christ, that are faithful and diligent, shall not be judged of Christ, and therefore should not be reproached by men, for the mixture of bad with good, hypocrites with the sincere, in the field of the church.

The servants were very forward to have these tares rooted up. The overhasty and inconsiderate zeal of Christ's servants, before they have consulted with their Master, is sometimes ready, with the

hazard of the church, to root out all that they presume to be tares.

The master very wisely prevented this. Scandalous offenders are to be censured, and we are to withdraw from them; yet it is possible there may be discipline, either so mistaken in its rules, or so overnice in the application, as may prove vexatious to many truly godly and conscientious. Great caution and moderation must be used in inflicting and continuing church censures, lest the wheat be trodden down, if not plucked up. Though gross transgressors, and such as openly oppose the gospel, are to be separated from the society of the faithful, yet many children of the kingdom are so defective, and many children of the wicked are so plausible, that no human skill can make an exact separation. Those who oppose themselves must not be cut off, but instructed, and that with meekness, 2 Tim. 2. 25.

The harvest is the end of the world. This world will have an end; though it continue long, it will not continue always. At harvest the reapers cut down all before them; not a field, not a corner, is left behind; so at the great day all must be judged, Rev. 20. 12, 13. At harvest every man's ground, and seed, and skill, and industry, will be manifested: see Gal. 6. 7, 8; when the harvest of those who sowed to the flesh, shall be a day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa. 17. 11.

The reapers are the angels; they shall be employed, at the great day, in executing Christ's righteous sentences, as ministers of his justice. Hell-torments are the fire, into which the tares shall then be cast, and in which they shall be burned.

Though good and bad are together in this world undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; then you shall plainly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal. 3. 18; 4. 1. They will then be bound in bundles. Associates in sin, will be so in shame and sorrow; and it will be an aggravation of their misery, as the society of glorified saints will add to the bliss of heaven. Let us pray, as David, Lord, gather not my soul with sinners, Ps. 26. 9, but let it be bound in the bundle of life, 1 Sam. 25. 29.

They will be cast into a furnace of fire; such will be the end of wicked, mischievous people, who are in the church as tares in the field. There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth; comfortless sor-

row, and incurable indignation at God, themselves, and one another, will be the endless torture of damned souls, aggravated by the greatness of their disappointment in falling from the privileges and presumptuous hopes to which they had attained. Let us therefore, knowing these terrors of the Lord, be persuaded not to do iniquity.

Heaven is the barn into which all God's wheat shall be gathered. They will no longer be exposed to wind and weather, sin and sorrow: no longer at a distance, in the field, but near, in the barn. Nay, heaven is a garner, 3. 12, in which the wheat will not only be separated from the tares of ill companions, but sifted from the chaff of their own corruptions.

The honour in reserve for the righteous is, that they shall shine as the sun in that kingdom. Here they are obscure and hidden, Col. 3. 3; but then they shall shine forth as the sun from behind a dark cloud. At death they shall shine forth to themselves, at the great day they will shine forth before all the world. They shall shine by reflection, with light borrowed from the fountain of light. Their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification published; God will own them for his children, and will produce the record of all their services and sufferings. They shall shine as the sun, the most glorious of all visible things. May we be found of that happy number, and may increasing numbers attend, and consider these things for their good. Our Saviour concludes, as before, with a demand of attention; Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. These are truths important to all, every one in the world is concerned to attend as they value the salvation of their souls.

26. There is considerable difficulty as to the plant intended by the word *zizania*, here used, but it is generally supposed to be darnel, which grows among corn, and has some resemblance to wheat. The description of it in this place does not at all apply to what are usually called tares.

38, 39. "The field is the world"—"the harvest is the conclusion of this state."—*Campbell*.

49. Ver. 31—35. *The parables of the mustard-seed, and the leaven.*

The scope of the parable of the seed is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this

way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons. Christ and the apostles, compared with the great ones of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel light is but as the dawning of the day; and in particular souls, it is at first the day of small things.

Yet it is growing and coming on. Great accessions were made to Christ's kingdom; nations were born at once, in spite of all opposition. In the soul where grace truly is, it will grow really, though perhaps insensibly. A grain of mustard-seed is small, but it is seed, and has in it the principle of growth. Grace will be gaining ground, shining more and more, Prov. 4. 18. Gracious habits established, actions quickened, and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more excited; here is the seed growing.

It will at last come to great strength and usefulness. The church like the vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root, and filled the earth, Ps. 80. 9—11. God's people have recourse to it for food and rest, shade and shelter. In particular persons, the principle of grace, if true, will be perfected at last. Grown Christians must seek to be useful to others, that those who dwell near may be the better for them. In the early ages of christianity, the poor despised preachers had all the power, wealth, learning, and false religion in the world against them, but the gospel dispensation soon overspread whole nations, and in due time will fill the earth.

The parable of the leaven showed that the gospel should prevail by degrees, but silently and insensibly. The preaching of the gospel works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it. Leaven is generally used in scripture as the emblem of corrupt doctrine, or wickedness; yet here it represents the truth and grace of God, which may warn us not to overstrain the emblems and parables of scripture.

The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumiliated and unbroken for sin. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity: for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The word must be hid in the heart, Ps. 119. 11; our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it

up, as Mary laid up the sayings of Christ, Luke 2. 51. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may be sanctified thereby, John 17. 17.

The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there; the word is quick and powerful, Heb. 4. 12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. It works silently and insensibly, Mark 4. 26—29, yet strongly and irresistibly: without noise, for so is the way of the Spirit, but without fail. Hide the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish, yet none sees how this is done, but by degrees the whole is leavened.

Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by their preaching, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind; it put the world into a ferment, and in a sense turned it upside down, Acts 17. 6, and by degrees made a wonderful change: the savour of the gospel was manifested in every place, 2 Cor. 2. 14; Rom. 15. 19. It was effectual by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder.

Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul, it works a universal change; it diffuses itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property even of the members of the body, Rom. 6. 13. This change is such as makes the soul to partake of the nature of the word, as the dough does of the leaven. The gospel savours of God, and Christ, and free grace, and another world, and these things now relish with the soul. It is a word of faith and repentance, holiness and love, and these are wrought in the soul by it. This savour is communicated insensibly, for our life is hid; but inseparably, for grace is a good part that shall never be taken away from those who have it.

We have here another reason given why Christ preached by parables, ver. 34, 35. Because the time was not yet come, for the more clear and plain discoveries of the mysteries of the kingdom; and the reason is, That the scripture might be fulfilled. The passage here quoted for it is Psalm 78. 2. Christ preached things which had been wrapt up in types and shadows; and those secret things are now become revealed.

From these parables we are taught to expect a gradual progress, therefore let us inquire: Are we growing in grace? Do we increase in spiritual light and vigour, and become more and more confirmed in holy principles and habits? Doubtless we should feel an ardent desire that the gospel may extend its influence to the remotest corners of the earth, but let us not forget *ourselves*, nor cease our prayers, that professing the truth of God, we may feel more the efficacy of Divine principles, and be gradually transformed into the Divine likeness, from glory to glory. May the sanctifying power of our religion diffuse itself through all our faculties, and bring our affections, words, and actions into subjection to the government of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—(60.)

32. The mustard plant in Judea grows much higher and thicker of leaves than with us, and plants growing to the height of ten or twelve feet are called trees in the east. Some botanists consider that the plant here mentioned is a species of *phytolacca* which grows in Palestine. It has the smallest seed of any tree in that country, though it grows to as great a height as any, and possesses properties like those of the common mustard or sinapis. *Lightfoot* quotes a passage from one of the Jewish rabbis, who mentions having a mustard plant into which he used to climb as men do into a fig-tree,

§ 49. Ver. 44—52. *The parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea, and of the householder.*

We have seen the nature of the kingdom of heaven, as it is set up in the world and in the heart, and as counteracted by human depravity and false doctrine. Here we have its privileges and blessings, and the way of admission to it.

We have four parables in these verses:

1. That of the treasure hid in the field. In Christ there is abundance of all that is rich and useful, and which will be a portion for us; all fulness, Col. 1. 19; John 1. 16; treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2. 3, of righteousness, grace, and peace: these are laid up for us in Christ. If we have an interest in him, all is ours.

The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid; it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the old testament and the new testament gospel. It is hid in a field, an open field; whoever will, let him come and search the scriptures; let him dig in this field, Prov. 2. 4; whatever we find, it is ours, if we take the right course.

Many slight the gospel, because they look only upon the surface of the field,

and therefore see no excellency in the christian institutes above those of the philosophers. But all who search the scriptures so as in them to find Christ and eternal life, John 5. 39, will discover such treasure in this field as makes it infinitely valuable; they will make it their own upon any terms. He that has found this treasure, hides it, which denotes a holy jealousy, lest we come short, Heb. 4. 1, looking diligently, Heb. 12. 15, lest Satan come between us and it. He rejoices that he is in a fair way to have an interest in Christ. Those who embrace gospel offers, upon gospel terms, buy this field for the sake of the unseen treasure in it. It is Christ in the gospel that we are to look unto. Those who would have saving benefit by Christ, must be willing to part with all, that they may make it sure to themselves; must count every thing but loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him. Though nothing can be given as a price for this salvation, yet much must be given up for the sake of it.

2. The parable of the pearl of great price, which is to the same purport with the former, of the treasure. All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls; one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned; but most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls. Jesus Christ is a pearl of great price, a jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God. In having him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever. What worthless pebbles are all worldly things, compared with this pearl of great price. A true christian seeks and finds this pearl of price: not only bids for it, but purchases it. What will it avail us to know of Christ, if we do not know him as ours, as made to us wisdom? 1 Cor. 1. 30. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ, must be willing to leave all to follow him.—A man may buy gold too dear, but not this pearl of price. When the convinced sinner has Christ discovered to his soul, as the all-gracious Saviour of the lost, all things else become comparatively worthless in his estimation. He sees that eternal misery is his portion if he obtain not this prize.

3. The parable of the net cast into the sea. The world is a vast sea, and the children of men, both small and great,

are in that sea. Men, in their natural state, are like the fishes of the sea, who have no ruler over them, Hab. 1. 14. The preaching of the gospel is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for His glory who has the sovereignty of this sea. Ministers are fishers of men, they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise they toil and catch nothing. This net gathers of every kind, as large drag-nets do. There is a time coming when this net will be full, and will be drawn to shore, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Hypocrites and true Christians shall be parted: miserable is the condition of those that shall then be cast away. While the net is in the sea, the fishermen cannot distinguish what is in it; but they draw all that is in it to the shore for the sake of the good that is therein. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though mixed, and many of them are bad.

Or, corrupt, putrid, that is, dead fish. This represents in strong terms the helpless state of sinners at the last.—(100.)

Everlasting misery and sorrow will be the portion of those who live among sanctified ones, but themselves die unsanctified. Christ himself often preached of hell-torments, as the everlasting punishment of hypocrites; and it is good for us to be often reminded of this awakening, quickening truth.

4. Here is the parable of the good householder. It is the will of Christ, that all those who read and hear the word should understand it; otherwise, how should they get good by it? It is good for us to examine ourselves, or to be examined, whether we have understood it or not. It is no disparagement to the disciples of Christ to be catechised. The scope of the parable itself was to give his commendation of their proficiency. Christ is ready to encourage willing learners in his school, though they are but weak.

He commends them as scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. A skilful, faithful minister of the gospel, is called a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, well versed in the things of the gospel, and well able to teach those things about which his business lies. A man may be a great philosopher and politician, and yet, if not instructed to the kingdom of heaven, he will make but a bad minister.

He compares this to a good householder, who brings forth fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, for the entertainment of his friends. See here, what should be a minister's furniture. Those who have so many and various occasions, need to stock themselves well, in their gathering days, with truths new and old; with ancient and modern improvements; that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. Old experiences and new observations, all have their use; and we must not content ourselves with old discoveries, but must be adding new. He should make use of what he gains for the benefit of others. Many have a talent, but they bury it; such are unprofitable servants. Our place is at Christ's feet, and we must never think ourselves got above it; we must daily learn the old lessons over again, and new ones also.

44. 'Treasure;' a gold or silver mine.—*A. Clarke.* It was also very usual in the east to bury property to conceal it from enemies.

§ 55. Ver. 53—58. *Jesus revisits Nazareth, and is again rejected there.*

Christ's own countrymen had rejected him once, yet he came to them again. Christ repeats his offers to those who have repulsed them. But his treatment this time was much the same as before.

When he taught them in their synagogues, they were astonished; not that they admired his doctrine, but only that it should be his; looking upon him as unlikely to be such a teacher. They owned that he had wisdom, and did mighty works; but the question was, Whence he had them? For they knew he was not brought up at the feet of their rabbis. Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men by their education. If they had not been wilfully blind, they must have concluded him to be Divinely assisted and commissioned, who, without the help of education, gave such proofs of extraordinary wisdom and power.

They upbraid him with his father. Is not this the carpenter's son? Yes, it is true he was reputed so; and no disparagement to be the son of an honest tradesman. They remember not, though they might have known it, that this carpenter was a son of David, Luke 1. 27. They upbraid him with his mother; they all knew her, and knew her to be in humble life. This is turned to his reproach

as if men had nothing to be valued by but foreign extraction, noble birth, or splendid titles; poor things to measure worth by! They upbraided him with his brethren; good men, but poor men, and therefore despised, and Christ for their sakes. His sisters too are all with us; they should have respected him the more, because he was one of themselves, but therefore they despised him.

This contempt did not trouble his heart; he imputes it to the common humour of the children of men. Prophets should have honour paid them, and commonly have. Notwithstanding this, they are commonly least regarded and revered in their own country. He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Unbelief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. If mighty works are not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but for want of faith in us. By grace ye are saved, and that is a mighty work, but it is through faith, Eph. 2. 8.

Let none wonder if faithful and able ministers of Christ are regarded with contempt, and even with enmity, where they labour most to do good, and may be supposed to possess most influence. Their Divine Master himself was thus despised. They appear to lose their labour; those who lightly regard them lose their own souls.

Let it not be said that the Lord Jesus Christ has no right in us, no influence over us, no honour from us, no glory by us. Let it not be said that we are offended in him, as certainly we are, if we do not truly and earnestly desire his coming in our hearts, to turn us from darkness to light, to convince us of the greatness of God's mercy, and our great want of it, and to keep us faithful to Christ in the love of his salvation, laying hold upon him as the Saviour who has made our peace with God.—(71.)

54. Nazareth was the place where Christ had been brought up, and in that sense was his own country.

which the most daring offenders cannot wholly shake off, are proofs and warnings of a future judgment and future misery to them. Notwithstanding this, Herod was hardened in his wickedness; for though he was convinced that John was a prophet, and one owned of God, yet he does not express remorse for his sin in putting him to death. The devils believe and tremble, but they never believe and repent. There may be the terror of strong convictions, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion.

We have here the history of the imprisonment and martyrdom of John. The particular sin he reproved Herod for, was marrying his half-brother Philip's wife. Philip was now living, and Herod inveigled his wife from him, and kept her for his own. Here was a complication of wickedness. John Baptist tells him of this particularly. We learn from Mark that Herod was one of John's hearers, and had done many things at his instance. If princes and great men break the law of God, they should be told of it by proper persons, and in a proper manner.

It is no new thing for God's ministers to suffer for doing well; but the testimony of John's conscience, that he suffered for well-doing, made his bonds easy. When men pretend to favour the gospel, yet live in evident evil, we must not favour their self-delusion, but must deliver our consciences, declaring their conduct to be inconsistent. The world may call this rudeness and bigotry. False professors or timid christians may censure it as want of courtesy; but the most powerful enemies can proceed no further than the Lord sees good.

Herod would have put John to death but for his fear of the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. Wicked men are restrained from some wicked practices, merely by their worldly interest, and not by any regard to God. The danger of sin that appears to sense, or to fancy only, influences men more than that which appears to faith. Herod feared that the putting of John to death might raise a rebellion among the people, which it did not; but he never feared it might excite his own conscience against him, which it did. Men fear being hanged for what they do not fear being damned for.

Herod's birth-day was kept with festivity; and in honour of the day the daughter of Herodias danced before them.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

V. 1—12. M. 6. 14—29. L. 9. 7—9.  
V. 13—21. M. 6. 32—44. L. 9. 10—17. J. 6. 1—12.  
V. 23—36. M. 6. 45—56. J. 6. 15—21.  
§ 61. 60. Ver. 1—12. *Death of John the Baptist.*

Herod, the tetrarch or chief governor of Galilee, said to his servants who told him of the fame of Jesus, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead. The terror and reproach of conscience,

Times of carnal mirth and jollity are convenient times for carrying on bad designs against God's people. We have no encouragement from scripture to favour those festive occasions which are so celebrated in the world. Her dancing pleased Herod. A vain and graceless heart is apt to be greatly in love with the lusts of the flesh and of the eye; and when it is so, it is entering into further temptation; for by that Satan gets and keeps possession.

He rashly promised Salome, with repeated oaths, that he would give her whatever she asked, though it was the half of his kingdom. Thus profusely would Herod reward a worthless dance, while imprisonment and death were the recompense of the man of God who sought the salvation of his soul! Her mother persuaded her to give up all those objects which would gratify a youthful mind, and to demand the head of John Baptist. How lamentable is their case whose parents are tempters to impiety and vice!

It is a great mistake to think that a wicked oath will justify a wicked action. When she demanded what was not lawful and honest, Herod ought to have declared that the obligation of it ceased. No man can lay himself under obligation to sin, because God has already so strongly obliged every man against sin. Rash oaths and bad companions are above all things to be avoided. Herod yielded, because the oath was public, and in compliment to them that sat at meat with him. But there was real malice to John at the bottom of this concession, or else he would have found evasions to get clear of his promise. Though a wicked mind never wants an excuse, yet the truth of the matter is, that every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, and enticed, Jam. 1. 14.

An officer was sent to cut off the head of this great man. The manner of the death of God's servants is of small moment when the conscience is at peace, hope assured, and God their comforter. But how different will be the hour of death and the time of retribution to their impatient persecutors!

Thus was that voice silenced, that burning and shining light extinguished; thus did that prophet, that Elias of the New Testament, fall a sacrifice to the resentments of an imperious, sensual woman! Thus he fell, a true martyr; dying, though not for the profession of his faith, yet for

the performance of his duty. However, though his work was soon done, it was done, and his testimony finished, for till then none of God's witnesses are slain. And God brought this good out of it, that hereby his disciples, who, while he lived, though in prison, kept close to him, after his death came to Jesus Christ.

When any thing ails us at any time, it is our duty and privilege to make Christ acquainted with it. If such a relation be dead or unkind, such a comfort lost or imbittered, go and tell Jesus, who knows already, but yet will know from us the trouble of our souls in adversity. We must take heed, lest our religion and the profession of it die with our ministers; when John was dead, his disciples resolved to abide by it still. When the shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the great Shepherd of the sheep to go to, who is still the same, Heb. 13. 8, 20. The removal of ministers should bring us nearer to Christ, into a more immediate communion with him. Comforts, otherwise highly valuable, are sometimes taken from us, because they come between us and Christ, and carry away that love and esteem which are due to him only. John had long since directed his disciples to Christ; but they could not leave their old master while he lived; now he is removed they go to Jesus, whom apparently they had sometimes emulated and envied for John's sake. It is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all. If our masters are taken from our head, this is our comfort—we have a Master in heaven, who himself is our Head.

Josephus mentions the baptism and preaching of John the Baptist, and adds, that a fatal destruction of Herod's army in his war with Aretas, king of Petrea, whose daughter was Herod's wife, whom he put away to make room for Herodias, was generally considered, by the Jews, to be a just judgment upon him for putting John the Baptist to death. Herod having, at the instigation of Herodias, disobliged the emperor, was deprived of his government, and they were both banished to Lyons, in France; which, says Josephus, was his just punishment for hearkening to her solicitations. And, lastly, it is told of this daughter of Herodias, that going over the ice in winter, the ice broke, and she slipped in up to her neck, which was cut through by the sharpness of the ice. God requiring her head, says Dr. Whitby, for that of the Baptist: which, if true, was a remarkable providence.—Henry. See note, Mark 6.

§ 63. Ver. 13—21. *Five thousand people miraculously fed.*

When Christ and his word withdraw from us, it is best for us to follow, pre-

ferring opportunities for our souls before any worldly advantages. The presence of Christ and his gospel makes a desert not only tolerable, but desirable.

Though Jesus retired for his own security and repose, yet he went forth, when he saw people desirous to hear him, as one willing both to toil and to expose himself for the good of souls. When he saw the multitude, he had compassion on them. To see a great multitude, and to think how many precious, immortal souls there are, the greatest part of whom, we have reason to fear, are neglected and ready to perish, should grieve us to the heart. Christ not only pitied them, but he helped them; he came into the world to be the great Healer. Afterwards, in compassion to them, he fed them. In all his favours Christ is moved with compassion.

The evening drawing on, the disciples urged Christ to send the multitude away. Christ's disciples are often more careful to show their discretion than their zeal; and their consideration, rather than their affection in the things of God. Christ expressed more tenderness toward the people than his disciples did; for what are the compassions of the most merciful men, compared with the tender mercies of God in Christ? See how loth Christ is to part with those who are resolved to cleave to him! They need not depart. Those who have Christ, need not depart to seek happiness in the creature.

He was himself clothed with a body, that he might encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. And he takes particular care of the body, when it is employed to serve the soul in his more immediate service. If we seek first the kingdom of God, and make that our chief care, we may depend upon God to add other things to us, as far as he sees fit, and we may cast all our care as to them upon him. The number present was five thousand men; and it is probable the women and children might be as many, if not more.

In that place there were only five loaves of barley bread, and two small fishes. Christ commanded the multitude to sit down, ordered the small provision to be brought, prayed for a blessing on it, and began to break and distribute the bread and the fishes to the disciples, that they might give it to the multitude, as if there had been enough for all. It continued to increase by his creating power, till the

whole multitude were satisfied. When this was done, Christ ordered them to gather the fragments, that nothing might be lost, and they took up twelve baskets full, one for each apostle, and on these pieces we may suppose they afterwards made several contented meals.

This teaches us, that in promoting the welfare of men's souls, we should have compassion on their bodies likewise. Yet even disciples are prone to shift this from themselves, though a little, with God's blessing, will go far in this matter, and they are rather enriched than impoverished by their liberality. Those who serve Christ must not covet delicacies; it was mean food on which the Saviour of the world used to satisfy his hunger. Let us remember always to crave a blessing on our meals, and learn to avoid all waste, considering that frugality is the proper source of liberality.

But we see also in this miracle an emblem of the Bread of life, which came down from heaven to sustain our perishing souls. The provisions of Christ's gospel appear mean and scanty to the world, yet they suffice for the whole multitude that feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving. His ministers may go forth to break the bread of life, assured it will increase in their hands, and supply all their hunger, and that while they feed others, they will enrich themselves. While other things perish in the using, spiritual gifts increase.

19. The loaves commonly made in Judea were, in fact, cakes, broad, thin, and hard, like biscuits, so that they would be divided by breaking, rather than by cutting. Thus also there would be more fragments than from bread like our loaves.

§ 64. Ver. 22-33. *Jesus walks upon the sea.*

Christ sent the people away; he sent them away with a blessing, with some parting words of caution, counsel, and comfort. He constrained the disciples to go into a ship first. They were loth to leave him alone, without any attendance. He went apart into a solitary place, and was there alone. Those are not Christ's followers who do not care for being alone, that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, with God and their own hearts.

He was alone at prayer; that was his business in solitude—to pray. Though Christ, as God, was Lord of all, and was prayed to, yet Christ, as man, had the form of a servant, and prayed. Christ has here set before us an example of secret prayer. There he was when the evening



was come, and there he was till towards morning, the fourth watch of the night. It is good, at least sometimes, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and to take full scope in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. We must not restrain prayer, Job 15. 4.

Observe the condition which the poor disciples were in at this time. It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of their duty, and to be sent to sea when their Master foresees a storm; but let them not take it unkindly: what he does they know not now; but they shall know hereafter, that Christ designs hereby to manifest himself with the more wonderful grace to them and for them. Being ordered by their Master to the other side, they made the best of their way forward. Though troubles and difficulties may disturb us in our duty, they must not drive us from it; through them we must press forward.

The extremity of the church and people of God, is Christ's opportunity to appear for them. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, but, when there is occasion, walks in darkness for their succour; helps, and that right early. He went unto them walking on the sea. This is a great instance of Christ's sovereign dominion over all the creatures; they are all under his feet, and at his command; they forget their natures, and change the qualities we call essential. We need not inquire how this was done; it is sufficient that it proves his Divine power, Job 9. 8. The same power that made iron to swim, 2 Kings 6. 6, did this. Christ can take what way he pleases to save his people.

Their fears were raised. When they saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; it is an apparition. Even appearances and approaches of deliverance sometimes occasion trouble and perplexity to God's people. The appearance of a spirit, or the fancy of the distance of the world of spirits from us, the just quarrel good spirits have with us, and the inveterate enmity evil spirits have against us: see Job 4. 14, 15. But the more acquaintance we have with God, the Father of Spirits, the more careful we are to keep ourselves in his love, the better we shall be able to deal with those fears. The perplexing, disquieting fears of good people, arise from mistakes con-

cerning Christ; the more clearly and fully we know him, with the more assurance we shall trust in him, Ps. 9. 10.

These fears were silenced. To these disciples it was enough to say, It is I; they knew his voice, as his sheep, John 10. 4. A right knowledge opens the door to true comfort, especially the knowledge of Christ. It is I, and therefore be courageous. If Christ's disciples be not cheerful in a storm, it is their own fault; he would have them so. Be not afraid. Christ will not be a terror to those to whom he manifests himself; when they come to understand him aright, the terror will be over. Be not afraid of the tempest, though very threatening; fear not, while I am so near you. Nothing needs be a terror to those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; no, not death itself.

Courage was Peter's master-grace, and that made him forward above the rest to express his love to Christ, though others perhaps loved him as well.

When he sees Christ, whom, doubtless, during the storm, he had many a time wished for, he is impatient to be with him. But it is an instance of Peter's caution and due observance of the will of Christ, that he would not come without a warrant. The boldest spirits must wait for a call to hazardous enterprises, and we must not rashly and presumptuously thrust ourselves upon them. Such as this to Peter we are not now to expect.

It was an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and despise the threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ.

It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own Peter in it. He might have condemned the proposal as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming. But Christ knew that it came from sincere and zealous affection, and graciously accepted it. Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities.

He bid him come. When the pharisees asked a sign, they had a repulse, because they did it with a design to tempt Christ; when Peter asked a sign, he had it, because he did it with a resolution to trust Christ. The gospel call is, Come, come

to Christ; venture all in his hand, and commit the keeping of your souls to him; venture through a stormy sea, a troublesome world, to Jesus Christ.

He bore him out when he did come. Peter walked upon the water. Through the strength of Christ we are borne up above the world, enabled to trample upon it, kept from sinking into it, kept from being overwhelmed by it, obtain victory over it, 1 John 5. 4, by faith in Christ's victory, John 16. 33, and with him are crucified to it, Gal. 6. 14. See blessed Paul more than a conqueror through him, and treading upon all the threatening waves, as not able to separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. 8. 35, &c. Thus the sea of the world is become like a sea of glass, congealed so as to bear; and they that have gotten the victory, stand upon it and rejoice, Rev. 15. 2, 3.

Peter walked upon the water, not for diversion or ostentation, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, only in spiritual pursuits; nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we are upheld by his power. It is in Christ's own strength that we reach after him, that we press forward toward the mark, being kept by the power of God, which power we must depend upon.

Christ bid him come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know his Lord's power, but that he might sink, and so know his own weakness; for, as he would encourage his faith, so he would check his confidence.

Peter was afraid. The strongest faith and the greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those that can say, Lord, I believe; must say, Lord help my unbelief. Nothing but perfect love will quite cast out fear. Good men often fail in the graces they are most eminent for. Peter was very bold at first, but afterwards his heart failed him. The lengthening out of a trial discovers the weakness of faith.

The cause of this fear was, he saw the wind boisterous. While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, and upon his word and power, he walked upon the water; but when he took notice of the danger he was in, then he feared. Looking at difficulties with an eye of sense, more than at precepts and promises with an eye of faith, is the cause of our inordinate fears, both as to public and personal concerns. Peter should have remembered that the

winds and the sea obeyed Christ; but we fear continually every day, because we forget the Lord our Maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13. We find it hard to be humbled without dejection, or animated without self-complacency; but our faith is irregular when it leads us to covet difficult or perilous services without a proper call. The Lord often lets his servants have their choice, to humble and prove them, and to show the greatness of his power and grace; yet in the most dangerous situation to which, in any way, he calls us, if our faith be steadfastly fixed on his infinite power, truth, and love, we may proceed with safety and confidence.

See the effect of this fear. While faith kept up, Peter kept above water; but when faith staggered, he began to sink. The sinking of our spirits is owing to the weakness of our faith; we are upheld, as we are saved, through faith, 1 Pet. 1. 5; therefore, when our souls are cast down and disquieted, the sovereign remedy is, to hope in God, Ps. 43. 5. When we look off from Christ, and view the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we apply to him, he will stretch out his arm and save us.

It was Christ's great mercy, that, upon the failing of Peter's faith, he did not leave him to sink outright, but gave him time to cry, Lord, save me. Such is the care of Christ concerning true believers; though weak, they do but begin to sink! A man is never utterly sunk, till he is in hell. Peter walked as he believed; to him, as to others, the rule held good, According to your faith so be it unto you.

The remedy he had recourse to in this distress, was the old, tried, approved remedy, prayer. Observe, his praying is fervent and importunate; he cried. When faith is weak, prayer should be strong. Our Lord Jesus has taught us in the day of our fear to offer up strong cries, Heb. 5. 7. Sense of danger will make us cry, sense of duty and dependence on God should make us cry to him. He cried, Lord, save me. Christ is the great Saviour, he came to save: those who would be saved, must not only come to him, but cry to him, for salvation; but we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking; sense of need drives us to him.

Though there was a mixture of presumption with Peter's faith in his first adventure, and of unbelief with his faith in his after-fainting, yet Christ did not

cast him off, for Christ's time to save is when we sink. Christ's hand is still stretched out to all believers, to keep them from sinking. Though he may seem to have left his hold, he doth but seem to do so, for they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand, John 10. 28. Our deliverance from our own fears, which else would overwhelm us, is owing to the hand of his power and grace, Ps. 34. 4.

He rebuked Peter ; for as many as he loves and saves, he reproves and chides. Our discouraging doubts and fears are all owing to the weakness of our faith. Could we but believe more, we should doubt less. The weakness of our faith, and the prevalence of our doubts, are very displeasing to our Lord Jesus. He doth not cast off weak believers, but he is not pleased with the weakness of our faith. Wherefore didst thou doubt ? Our doubts and fears would soon vanish before strict inquiry into their cause ; for there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind. Even in a stormy day he is to them a very present Help.

When Christ was come into the ship, they were presently at the shore. He could as easily have walked to the shore ; but when ordinary means are to be had, miracles are not to be expected.

The storm ceased. When Christ comes into a soul, he makes winds and storms to cease there, and commands peace.

None but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea : the disciples yield to the evidence, and confess their faith ; Thou truly art the Son of God. They knew before that he was the Son of God, but now they know it better. Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active. It is good for us to know more and more of the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed.

They were suitably affected ; they worshipped Christ. Faith is the proper principle of worship, and worship the genuine product of faith. He that comes to God, must believe ; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb. 11. 6.

That the Messiah would be the Son of God, was a doctrine of the Jews ; therefore, if they acknowledged him as the Christ, they must have regarded him as the Son of God, a title they had repeatedly heard him claim to himself.—(75.)

22. This and other passages wherein we find how anxious Jesus was to disperse the multitudes, or to withdraw from them, after he had made eminent displays of his power, shows how unwilling he was to give any countenance to the ideas of the earthly nature of the Messiah's kingdom, or to afford any umbrage to the rulers.

33. *Middleton* shows that there is no ground for translating this passage "a son of God," or "son of a God."

§ 64. Ver. 34-36. *Jesus healing the sick.*

Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. He reckons it the greatest honour we can do him, to make use of him. The people had knowledge of the miracles Christ had wrought, and therefore they flocked to him. Those who know Christ's name, will make their application to him : if Christ were better known, he would not be neglected as he is.

They had knowledge of him, that is, of his being among them, and that he would be but a while among them. The discerning the day of our opportunities is a good step toward the improvement of it.

They brought unto him all that were diseased. Did we but rightly seek our own peace and welfare, we should seek Christ. With great importunity they besought him. Well may we beseech to be healed, when God by his ministers beseecheth us to be healed. The greatest favours and blessings are to be obtained from Christ by entreaty ; Ask, and it shall be given. They came humbly, beseeching him to help them ; and their desiring to touch the hem of his garment, intimates that they thought themselves unworthy he should take any particular notice of them. It was in this country and neighbourhood that the woman was cured by touching the hem of his garment, and was commended for her faith. The experiences of others may be of use both to direct and to encourage us in our attendance on Christ. It is good using those means and methods which others before us have sped well in the use of.

As many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Those whom Christ heals, he heals perfectly. Though spiritual healing be not perfected at first, yet, doubtless, he that has begun the good work, will perform it, Phil. 1. 6. The healing virtue that is in Christ, is put forth for the benefit of those who by a true and lively faith touch him. Christ is in heaven, but his word is nigh us, and he himself in that word. On such easy terms are spiritual cures offered by him, that he may truly be said to heal freely ; so that if our souls

die, it is owing to ourselves. He could have healed us, he would have healed us, but we would not be healed; our blood will lie upon our own heads. Were men more acquainted with Christ, and with the diseased state of their souls, they would flock to receive his healing influences; for all that touch him, though with a feeble, trembling faith, shall be made whole. While we consider these wonders of Christ's love and power, shall we refuse to adore him, and to acknowledge that of a truth he is the Son of God?

Observe, where lay the healing virtue? Not in their finger but in their faith; or rather, it was in Christ, whom their faith took hold upon.—(73.)

## CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1-29. M. 7. 1-31.  
Ver. 32-39. M. 8. 1-10.

§ 66. Ver. 1-9. *Jesus discourses with the pharisees about human traditions.*

Some of the scribes and pharisees came to seek matter of accusation against our Lord. [His fame was now so great that some who were inhabitants of Jerusalem came to watch and ensnare him.—(36)] Finding that neither he nor his disciples neglected the Divine law, they objected to him his disregard of the traditions of the elders. They pretended that these had been received by revelation from God, and delivered down by word of mouth; thus the scribes, who claimed to be the interpreters of them, had the power of imposing upon the people what they pleased. They were so addicted to these vanities, that some asserted that it was more criminal to omit washing before they ate, than to break the seventh commandment! Such additions to God's laws reflected upon his wisdom, as if he had omitted something necessary which man could supply; and in one way or other they always clash with the Divine precepts, and lead men to disobey God. Our Lord, therefore, taught his disciples to disregard these human inventions.

Doubtless at that time the disciples observed the distinction of meats and the appointments of the law of Moses, but this washing was an addition of man, and our Lord well answered their cavil, by asking why they transgressed God's commandments by their traditions. The gospel itself, and the obedience to death of the Saviour, were intended to magnify

this law, and to enforce its obligations. How thankful, then, ought we to be for the *written* word of God! and never let us think that the religion of the bible can be improved by any human addition, either in doctrine or practice.

Our blessed Lord spoke of their traditions, as they called them, as novel inventions of their own, and pointed out one instance in which this was notoriously the case, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment. The whole of children's duty to their parents is included in honouring them, which is the spring and foundation of all the rest. Our Saviour here speaks of the duty of children's maintaining their parents, and being every way serviceable to their comfort; and insists upon the penalty annexed to the breach of this commandment. He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death, Exod. 21. 17. By our Saviour's application of this law, it appears, that denying service or relief to parents is included in cursing them. Though the language be respectful, what will that avail, if deeds be not agreeable thereto?

Observe what their tradition was—That a man could not in any case bestow his worldly estate better than to give it to the priests, and devote it to the service of the temple. And that when any thing was so devoted, it was not only unlawful to alienate it, but all other obligations, though ever so just and sacred, were superseded, and a man was thereby discharged from them. This proceeded partly from the superstitious regard they had to the temple, and partly from their love of money; for what was given to the temple, the priests were gainers by. See how they allowed the application of this to the case of children. When their parents' necessities called for their assistance, they pleaded, that all they could spare from themselves and their children, they had devoted to the treasury of the temple; "It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me," and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them. Many undutiful, unnatural children made use of this plea, and they justified them in it. This was making the command of God of no effect. Whatsoever leads to, or countenances disobedience, does, in effect, make void the command; and those who take upon them to dispense with God's law, do, in Christ's account, repeal and disannul it. To break

the law is bad, but to teach men so, as the scribes and pharisees did, is much worse. But thanks be to God, in spite of them and of all their traditions, the command stands in full force and power.

Particularly note our Lord's regard to the right discharge of duties to each other, especially that of children to their parents. No forms, notions, charities, nor any thing else that looks like faith, zeal, and piety, can prove those true christians who neglect to honour their father or mother, or to supply their wants.

In the other part of Christ's answer he charges them with hypocrisy. They approached God in his ordinances with good words, and honoured him with fair professions, but their hearts were estranged from his holy character, law, and service, by pride, covetousness, and all wickedness; so that their worship was as unprofitable to themselves as their instructions were to the people. Alas, too many prove that they draw nigh to God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. Man can perceive open profaneness, but it is only Christ that can discern hypocrisy, Luke 16. 15; and it is a sin which of all others his soul hates.

Isaiah spoke, 29. 13, of the men of that generation to which he prophesied, yet Christ applies it to these scribes and pharisees. The reproofs of sin and sinners which we find in scripture, were designed to reach the like persons and practices to the end of the world, for they are not of private interpretation, 2 Pet. 1. 20. Threatenings against others belong to us, if we are guilty of the same sins. The prophecies of scripture are every day fulfilling.

The doom of hypocrites is put in a little compass; "In vain do they worship me." It will neither please God, nor profit themselves; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompense.

2. *Lightfoot* selects the following out of many examples of the value the Jews set upon their own traditions: "The words of the scribes are lovely, above the words of the law; for the words of the law are weighty and light, but the words of the scribes are all weighty." See note on Mark 7.

§ 66. Ver. 10—20. *Jesus warns the multitude and his disciples against things which really defile.*

Christ shows that the disciples were not to be blamed, as having done any thing in itself evil. He turns from the scribes and pharisees, as wilful and unteachable, and points to the multitude, who were willing to be taught. Not only scholars, but the ordinary people, must apply their

minds to understand the words of Christ. There is need of great intentness of mind and clearness of understanding, to free men from the corrupt principles and practices they have been bred up in, and long accustomed to. He assured them that the defilement they ought to be afraid of, did not arise from what entered their mouths as food, but from what proceeded out of their mouths, which showed the wickedness of their hearts.

When our Lord had spoken thus, he seems to have left the people, and the disciples afterwards asked whether he knew how much the pharisees were offended. His reply showed that the teaching or traditions of the scribes and pharisees were not from God, and must be destroyed to make way for true religion, in which nothing not immediately from God can last or flourish. He bade his disciples let them alone; neither court their favour, nor dread their displeasure.

Nothing in religion is of any value excepting what God himself has planted; nothing will endure in the soul but the regenerating graces of the Holy Spirit; nothing should be admitted into the church but what is from above, therefore whosoever is offended by a plain, reasonable declaration of the truth, we should not be disconcerted.

They are blind leaders of the blind. They are grossly ignorant of the things of God, and strangers to the spiritual nature of the Divine law; and yet so proud, that they undertake to show others the way to heaven, when they themselves know not one step of the way. Let them alone, their case is desperate; you may provoke, but never convince them.

They will shortly be plunged into destruction. The blind leaders and the blind followers will perish together. The sin and ruin of the deceivers will be no security to those who are deceived by them, because they shut their eyes against the light which would have rectified their mistake. Though Christ rejects the wilfully ignorant who care not to be taught, he can have compassion on the ignorant who are willing to learn, Heb. 5. 2.

The disciples desire to be better instructed in this matter. Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind will seek for instruction.

Christ gave them reproof for their weakness and ignorance. As many as Christ

loves and teaches, he thus rebukes. These are very ignorant indeed, who understand not that moral pollutions are abundantly worse, and more dangerous than ceremonial ones. Christ expects from us knowledge, grace, and wisdom, according to the time and means we have had. But though he chid their dulness, he taught them.

An inordinate appetite, intemperance, and excess in eating, come out of the heart, and are defiling; but meat in itself is not so, as the pharisees supposed. It may be cleanliness, but it is no point of conscience, to wash before meat; we mistake if we place religion in it. It is not the practice itself, but the opinion it is built upon, that Christ condemns, as if meat commended us to God; whereas christianity stands not in such observances.

It is the heart that is desperately wicked, Jer. 17. 9, for there is no sin in word or deed which was not first in the heart. Some of the corrupt streams which flow from this fountain are specified. Though they do not all come out of the mouth, yet they all come out of the man, and are the fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there.

1. Evil thoughts, sins against all the commandments. Therefore David puts vain thoughts in opposition to the whole law, Ps. 119. 113. Carnal fancies and imaginations are evil thoughts, wickedness in the contrivance. 2. Sins against the sixth commandment; these come from malice in the heart against our brother's life, or contempt of it. 3. Sins against the seventh commandment; these come from the unclean, carnal heart. There is adultery in the heart first, and then in the act. 4. Sins against the eighth commandment, cheats, wrongs, rapines, and all injurious contracts; the fountain of all these is in the heart; that is exercised in these covetous practices. 5. Against the ninth commandment. If truth, holiness, and love, which God requires in the inward parts, reigned as they ought, there would be no false witness-bearing, Ps. 64. 6. Jer. 9. 8. 6. Blasphemies, speaking evil of God, against the third commandment; speaking evil of our neighbour, against the ninth; these come from contempt of both in the heart.

These are the things which defile a man. Sin is defiling to the soul, renders it unlovely and abominable in the eyes of the pure and holy God, unfit for communion with him, and for the enjoyment

of him in the New Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter that defileth, or worketh iniquity. The mind and conscience are defiled by sin, and that makes every thing else so, Tit. 1. 15. These therefore are the things we must carefully avoid, and all approaches toward them.

When Christ teaches, he will show men the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; he will teach them to humble themselves for these defilements, and to seek to be cleansed from them in the fountain which he hath opened for sin and uncleanness. Inward sanctification is of more importance than any outward forms and notions. These lessons Christ teaches his disciples—by watchfulness and profiting in them, we may know ourselves to belong to that happy company.

13. "Every plantation." The pharisees, as a religious body, were now a plantation, which God did not own, and which should be destroyed.—*A. Clarke.*

§ 67. Ver. 21—28. *Jesus heals the daughter of a Syrophenician woman.*

Jesus went thence. Wilful prejudices against the gospel, and cavils at it, often provoke Christ to withdraw. He departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; not to those cities, they were excluded from any share in Christ's mighty works, ch. 11. 21, 22, but into the part of the land of Israel which lay that way: thither he went, as Elias to Sarepta, a city of Sidon: thither he went, to look after this poor woman, whom he had mercy for. The dark corners of the country, the most remote, shall have a share of his benign influences; afterwards the ends of the earth shall see his salvation, Isa. 49. 6.

Observe the address of the woman of Canaan to Christ. She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably one of the posterity of the accursed nations devoted by that word, Cursed be Canaan. But the doom of nations does not reach every member of them. Her address was very importunate. She relates her misery. There were degrees of that misery, this was the worst. It was a common case at that time, and very calamitous. The vexations of children are the trouble of parents, and nothing should be more so than their being under the power of Satan. The distress and trouble of her family now brought her to Christ; she came to him, not for teaching, but for healing; yet, because she came in faith, he did not reject her. Though it is need that drives

us to Christ, yet we shall not therefore be driven from him.

In calling him Lord, the Son of David, she owns him to be the Messiah; that is the great truth which faith should fasten upon, and fetch comfort from. From the Lord we may expect acts of power—he can command deliverances; from the Son of David we may expect all the mercy and grace which were foretold concerning him. Though a Gentile, she owns the promise made to the fathers of the Jews. She doth not limit Christ to any particular instance of mercy, but mercy, mercy, is what she begs; she pleads not merit, but depends upon mercy. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to be earnest in prayer for them, especially for their souls. Have I a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud devil, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by him at his will; Lord, help them. This is a case more deplorable than that of bodily possession. Bring them by faith and prayer to Christ, who alone is able to heal them. Parents should look upon it as great mercy to themselves, to have Satan's power broken in the souls of their children.

Observe the discouragement she met with in this address; in all the history of Christ's ministry we do not meet with the like. He was wont to countenance and encourage all that came to him. Christ, who knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such discouragements. Many methods of Christ's providence, and especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained by this story, which is left upon record, to teach us that there may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns in his face, and to encourage us, therefore, though he slay us, yet to trust in him.

He heard her, and was pleased with her, and strengthened her with strength in her soul to prosecute her request, though he did not immediately give her the answer she expected. By seeming to draw away the desired mercy from her, he drew her on to be the mere importunate for it. Every accepted prayer is not immediately an answered prayer.

It was some relief that the disciples interposed on her behalf. Continued importunity may be uneasy to men, even to

good men; but Christ loves to be cried after. His answer to the disciples quite opposed her expectations. It is a great trial when we have to question whether we are of those to whom Christ was sent. And, blessed be God, no room is now left for this doubt; the distinction between Jew and Gentile is taken away: we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many; and if for many, why not for me?

When she continued her importunity, he gave her not only a repulse, but a seeming reproach. This might have driven her to despair, if her faith had not been very strong indeed. Gospel grace, and miraculous cures, the appurtenances of it, were children's bread; they belonged to those to whom pertained the adoption, Rom. 9. 4, and were not upon the same level with that rain from heaven, and those fruitful seasons which God gave to the nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways, Acts 14. 16, 17.

Those whom Christ intends most signally to honour, he humbles in the sense of their own meanness and unworthiness. We must first see ourselves to be as dogs, less than the least of all God's mercies, before we are fit to be dignified and privileged with the saints. Here is the strength of her faith and resolution, in breaking through all these discouragements. A proud, unhumiliated heart would not have borne it. Thus the Jews were wont proudly to distinguish themselves from the Gentiles; if the woman had not been a very humble believer, she would have taken great offence at this affronting distinction; but she turned it into an argument in support of her request. A humble, believing soul, that truly loves Christ, takes every thing in good part that he saith and doth, and puts the best construction upon it. What Christ said silenced the disciples, but not the woman. The more sensibly we feel the burden, the more resolutely we should pray for the removal of it. She improved in prayer. Instead of charging Christ with unkindness, she lays the fault upon herself. She will not argue whether she was of those to whom Christ was sent or not. Many weak christians perplex themselves with questions and doubts about their election, whether they are of the house of Israel or not. Let them continue instant in prayer for mercy and grace; throw themselves by faith at the feet of Christ, and say, If I perish, I will perish here; and

then that matter will by degrees clear itself. If we cannot reason down our unbelief, let us pray it down. A fervent, affectionate, Lord, help me, will help us over many discouragements, which seem ready to overwhelm us.

The state of this woman is a proper emblem of the state of a sinner, deeply conscious of the misery of his soul.—(11.)

Her acknowledgment was very humble; Truth, Lord. You cannot speak so of a humble believer, but he is ready to speak as meanly and slightly of himself. Some that seem to dispraise themselves, will yet take it as an affront if others do so too. Faith can find encouragement even in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. It is true, the full and regular provision is for the children only, but the neglected crumbs are allowed to the dogs that attend expecting them. As if she had said, We poor Gentiles cannot expect the stated ministry and miracles of the Son of David—that belongs to the Jews; but they begin now to be weary of their meat, and to play with it; they find fault with it, and crumble it away; surely then some of the broken food may fall to a poor Gentile. When we are ready to surfeit on the children's bread, we should remember how many there are that would be glad of the crumbs.

Observe here, those who are conscious that they deserve nothing, will be thankful for any thing. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, even the very crumbs of the Bread of life. Her faith encouraged her to expect these crumbs. Rather let me be set with the dogs than turned out of the house; for in my Father's house there is not only bread enough, but to spare, Luke 15. 17, 19. She, though a Canaanite, approved herself a true daughter of Israel, who had power with God and prevailed.

Christ commended her faith. Several other graces shone bright in her conduct of this affair—wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer; but these were the product of her faith. Of all graces, faith honours Christ most; therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most. Though the faith of all the saints is alike precious, yet it is not in all alike strong. The greatness of faith consists much in resolute adherence to Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, even in

the face of discouragements; to love him, and trust him as a friend, even when he seems to come against us as an enemy. Though weak faith, if true, shall not be rejected, yet great faith shall be commended, and well-pleasing to Christ.

He cured her daughter. Those who will deny Christ nothing, shall find that he will deny them nothing at last, though for a time he seem to hide his face from them. Thou wouldest have thy sins pardoned, thy corruptions mortified, thy nature sanctified; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And what canst thou desire more? When we come as this poor woman, to pray against Satan and his kingdom, we concur with the intercession of Christ, and it shall be accordingly. The event answered to the word of Christ. The mother's faith prevailed for the daughter's cure. He spake, and it was done.

From hence let such as seek help from the Lord, and receive no gracious answer, learn to increase their importunity, and turn even their unworthiness and discouragements into pleas for mercy. Let sinners submit without reserve to every charge, and rely upon that mercy; for true faith gathers strength by trials, as healthy bodies do by exercise, and the Lord will at length abundantly answer every believing prayer.

§ 68, 69. Ver. 29-39. *Jesus heals the sick, and miraculously feeds more than four thousand.*

We read not of any thing Christ did in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but the casting of the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter, as if he took that journey on purpose. Let not ministers grudge pains to do good, though but to few. He that knows the worth of souls, would go a great way to help to save one from death and Satan's power.

Jesus departed thence. He sat down by the sea of Galilee, on a mountain that all might see him, and have free access to him; for he is an open Saviour. Great multitudes came to him; brought their sick relations and friends along with them. Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief is to lay it at Christ's feet, to spread it before him, and then submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those that would have spiritual healing from Christ, must lay themselves at his feet, to be ruled as he pleaseth.

Here were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, brought to Christ. See what work sin has made! what various



diseases are human bodies subject to! Here were such diseases as fancy could neither contribute to the cause of nor to the cure of, yet these were subject to the commands of Christ. Christ's power may comfort us in all our weaknesses; and his pity may comfort us in all our miseries. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. Those who were healed, glorified God; if he heal our diseases, all that is within us must bless his holy name. It is generally allowed that the word rendered maimed, signifies such persons as had been deprived of their limbs, and their restoration may be considered as a most wondrous effect of our Lord's power.

The want the people were reduced to serves to magnify the mercy of their supply. Jesus fed them when they were hungry; and then food was doubly welcome. Now observe how his power was distrusted by his disciples. Whence should they have so much bread in the wilderness? It was an improper question. Could they be at a loss while they had their Master with them. Forgetting former experiences leaves us under present doubts.

His power was discovered to the multitude in the plentiful provision he made for them; the manner is much the same as before. He first gave thanks. The word used in the former miracle was, he blessed. It is all one; giving thanks to God is a proper way of craving a blessing from God. And when we come to ask and obtain further mercy, we ought to give thanks for the mercies we have received. Though the disciples had distrusted Christ's power, yet he made use of them now as before. He is not provoked, as he might be, by the weaknesses and infirmities of his ministers, to lay them aside; but still he gives to them, and they to his people, of the word of life.

All did eat, and were filled. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills. While we labour for the world, we labour for that which satisfieth not, Isa. 55. 2; but those that duly wait on Christ, shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, Ps. 65. 4. To show that they all had enough, there was a great deal left. With Christ there is bread enough, and to spare; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek more.

An account was taken of the guests. Here were four thousand men fed; but what were they to that great family provided for by the Divine care every day? On God the eyes of all the creatures wait, and he giveth them their food in due season, Ps. 104. 27; 145. 15.

Christ sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not expect miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables. Christ himself departed by ship to another place; being the Light of the world, he must go about to do good.

While we are willing to endure hardships in attending the concerns of our souls, we may be sure that our Lord will supply what he sees needful for our support. But, alas, how soon do even believers forget his interpositions for them! How often do we object against self-denying duties, and our unbelieving doubts revive under lesser trials, after we have been delivered from greater. Lord, increase our faith, and pardon our unbelief; still renew thy mercies towards us, teaching us to live upon thy fulness and bounty for all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

30. According to *Grotius*, and the usual sense of the words in pure Greek, "maimed" may be limited to the meaning given by *Erasmus*, of mutilated; the word is so used, Mark 9, 43.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1-12. M. 8. 11-21.  
Ver. 13-28. { M. 8. 27-38. } L. 9. 18-27.  
                  { M. 9. 1. }

§ 70. Ver 1-4. *The pharisees and sadducees again ask a sign.*

The pharisees and sadducees were opposed to each other in principles and in conduct; yet they joined in their enmity to Christ. As they could find nothing to object against his conduct and doctrine, they sought to try his power, desiring a sign from heaven to convince them he was the Messiah, though his miracles were sufficient proof; for no man could do what he did, unless God were with him. But they desired a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon something which would gratify the curiosity of the proud. The proofs of Divine revelation are to be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. And it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart,

to think that we should be wrought upon by means and advantages we have not, while we slight those we have.

The descent of the Holy Ghost at Christ's baptism, and the voice of the Father declaring him his beloved Son, were signs from heaven; but they wanted something else, probably more like the appearances of the Divine glory their fathers witnessed at the giving of the law. To this our Lord answered, that they observed the clouds and the sky, and thence conjectured what weather it would be, and acted accordingly in their worldly concerns, and they might as easily and more certainly have discerned the signs of the times. The sceptre was now departed from Judah; Daniel's seventy weeks were just ending; John Baptist's ministry, as the forerunner of the Messiah, long ago foretold, showed his approach; and all the prophecies were being fulfilled in his character, doctrine, and miracles; so that it was plain that these were the times of the Messiah. Christ again reproved them; and having refused them any other sign than that of Jonah, the type of his own death and resurrection, he left them to their own perverseness. There are many who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their opportunities, and so let them slip. It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

How often men show great ingenuity and wisdom, and make accurate observations in things of a worldly nature; but when they turn their minds to spiritual subjects, they seem quite destitute of reasoning powers, and unable to understand the plainest truths. Again, many are satisfied to act upon probabilities in worldly concerns, who will not be satisfied with the fullest demonstration in matters of religion,

71. Ver. 5—12. *Jesus cautions the disciples against the doctrine of the pharisees.*

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning bread; he speaks to them of spiritual things under a similitude; and they misunderstand him of carnal things. The occasion of it was, their forgetting to take provisions along with them. The corrupt principles and practices of the pharisees and sadducees are compared to leaven; they were sour, and swelling, and spreading, like leaven; they fermented wherever they came.

They thought Christ hereby upbraided them with their improvidence and forgetfulness. He reproves their distrust of his ability and readiness to supply them. He does not chide them for their little forecast, as they expected he would. Parents and masters must not be angry at the forgetfulness of their children and servants, further than is necessary to make them take more heed another time. That which he chides them for is their little faith. The aggravation of their distrust was the experience they so lately had of the power and goodness of Christ in providing for them. We are perplexed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not duly remember our former experiences of Divine power and goodness. He reproves their misunderstanding the caution he gave them. Christ's disciples may well be ashamed of the slowness and dulness of their apprehensions in Divine things; especially when they have long enjoyed the means of grace. He took it ill that they should think him as thoughtful about bread as they were: that they should be so little acquainted with his way of preaching, as to take literally what he spake by way of parable.

Then understood they what he meant. Christ shows us our folly and weakness, that we may stir up ourselves to take things right. He repeated what he had said, that they should beware of the leaven; and so obliged them, by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word. And those truths are most precious which we have thus discovered. They now perceived that he referred to the pernicious doctrines of those sects. Let us seek to profit by our dulness and blunders, and to be made more attentive to Christ's instructions.

73. Ver. 13—20. *Peter's testimony that Jesus was the Christ.*

Our Lord seems to have retired to the northern extremity of the land, for the sake of privacy and discourse with his disciples. He inquired of them what the people said of him who appeared as a man, but gave evident proof that he was an extraordinary person. He calls himself the Son of man. He was called, and justly, the Son of God; for so he was; but he called himself the Son of man, for he is

really and truly man, made of a woman. Christ called himself so, to show that he was humble. It was a title peculiar to him as Mediator. I am the Messiah, that Son of man promised, Dan. 7. 13. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching. From their answers it appears, that even such as thought highly of him had not suitable apprehensions of his real dignity. Being asked what they thought, Peter, for himself and his brethren, replied that they were assured of his being the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. This showed that they believed Jesus to be more than man.

Our Lord declared Peter to be blessed, as this knowledge and faith were not the result of human wisdom or teaching, but of immediate revelation from the Father. It was the teaching of God alone which made him to differ from his unbelieving countrymen, who had enjoyed the same outward means of instruction and conviction. Peter was at this time ignorant of many truths, and prejudiced against them; he understood not the plan of redemption by the blood of Christ; he knew little of his own heart; he had many carnal expectations; he was afterwards left to commit blunders, and even grievous sins; he had persecutions to endure, even unto death—yet he was blessed, because he was born again, and was a sincere believer in Christ. Having received these gifts, more would be given to him.

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona. Christ reminds Peter of his rise and original. Let him remember the rock out of which he was hewn, that he may see he was preferred by the Divine favour: it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit, must remember who is their Father. Having reminded him of this, Christ makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; Blessed art thou. True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they are so, makes them so.

Christ added that he had named him Peter, in allusion to his stability or firmness in professing the truth. This bold answer corresponded to the name, for it contained that fundamental truth respecting his person and offices, upon which, as on a rock, he would build his church, so surely that neither men nor devils should

overturn it. Christ gave him that name when he first called him, John 1. 42, and here he confirms it; Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth, 2 Pet. 1. 12. This must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see 1 Cor. 3. 11, 1 Pet. 2. 6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, on him they rest and have constant dependence.

The word translated rock, is not the same word as Peter, but is of a similar meaning. Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that Christ meant *the person* of Peter was the rock. Without doubt He himself is the Rock, the tried foundation of the church, and woe to him that attempts to lay any other. Peter's confession is this rock doctrinally; the profession of these truths constitutes a man a member of the visible church; vital belief of them constitutes a member of the real church, but nothing less can entitle him to the name of a believer. Against these doctrines, the power and policy of Satan and his servants have been directed in every age. Yet the church established on Christ subsists, and will continue to the end. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins, 1 Cor. 15. 14, 17. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and character of infidelity. This is that article, with the admission or the denial of which the church either rises or falls; "the main hinge on which the door of salvation turns;" those who let go this, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a society, united upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great it is, and has prevailed.

Our Lord next declared the authority with which Peter would be invested. He

spoke in the name of his brethren, and doubtless this related to them as well as to him. Keys were an ancient emblem of authority, and the expression related to that authority by which they were employed as the representatives of Christ. They were endued with the Holy Ghost, that they might infallibly declare his truth and his will to mankind. The apostles themselves do not appear to have had an infallible insight into the characters of men, and they were liable to mistakes and sins in their own conduct; but they were kept from error, in stating the way of acceptance and salvation, the rule of obedience, the believer's character and experience, the final doom of unbelievers and hypocrites. In such matters their decision was absolute, and it was ratified in heaven.

• It is not any civil secular power that was hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; the instructions they received were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Acts 1. 3. In this respect their apostolical authority continues in their doctrine as transmitted to us in the New Testament. All other ministers than the apostles, of whatever rank, name, or age, can do no more than declare their doctrine and apply it in particular cases. As far as they proceed according to scripture in these things, their decisions are warranted; but not when they mistake the doctrine or its application. All pretensions of any one, either to absolve or retain men's sins, are blasphemous and absurd, and claim even more than apostolical authority. None can forgive sins but God only.

This binding and loosing means, whatsoever thou shalt declare to be my will on earth, shall be confirmed in heaven.—(33.) In the common language of the Jews it signified to prohibit and to permit, or to teach what is lawful or unlawful.—(62.) Doubtless Christ, when he used the common phrase, was understood by his hearers in the common sense.—(45.) When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, and wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they exercise this authority of binding and of loosing.

• Our Lord having opened these things to his disciples, charged them not to speak to others concerning his being the Messiah. They might collect it from evidences, but the time for an explicit declaration was not yet come.

14. The Jews had a tradition that Jeremiah would appear when the Messiah came.

18. Upon this passage, *T. H. Horne* observes, "Peter is here plainly meant. The apostles are also called in other parts of the N. T. the foundation on which the church is built, as Eph. 2. 20 Rev. 21. 14; as being the persons employed in erecting the church by preaching. It is here promised that Peter should commence the building of it by his preaching, which was fulfilled by his first converting the Jews, Acts 2. 14—42, and also the Gentiles, Acts 10. 34—48. This passage, therefore, gives no countenance to papal supremacy, but the contrary, for this prerogative was personal and incommunicable." Also see *Elisley A. Clarke* considers, with several of the fathers and many able critics, that the words of our Lord have direct reference to the confession of Peter, that Christ was the Son of the living God. *Townsend* says, The most probable meaning of the passage appears to be that which comprises both the controverted senses; that is, reference to Peter personally, and to his confession. *Granville Sharp* has considered the passage very fully, and his view is, that the first term *Petros*, or Peter, in the original signifying only a stone, thus represents one out of a number of believers; the second, *Petra*, or Rock, is the title often applied to the Supreme Being in scripture, and therefore not applicable to any mere man. This wholly obviates the papal assumption of Peter's supremacy; and he observes, that whatever was the language in which our Lord spake to his disciples, the Greek record is our authoritative instructor. *Hales* considers that our Lord referred to himself as the Rock. *Lightfoot* says there is nothing to forbid us to think that our Saviour used the very same Greek words. He adds, Why did Matthew not use the same word in both cases if our Saviour used the same in Syriac? He considers that the words concerning the Rock are from Is. 28. 16, which, as interpreted in very many places of the N. T., do most plainly speak of Christ.—The courts of justice and public councils used to be held in the gates of cities. The safety and happiness of a city depended much upon the strength of its gates, and the wisdom of those who sat there. Perhaps our Saviour here alludes to this—meaning, that neither the strength nor the policy of Satan shall be able to overcome his church.—*T. H. Horne*.

§ 74. Ver. 21—23. *Christ foretells his sufferings and rebukes Peter.*

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning his own sufferings. Now he began to foretell them, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of sufferings, now he began to speak plainly and expressly about them. Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it. From that time, when they had made the full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this; thus he proceeded to make them acquainted with his priestly office.

Observe, he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances

of them, and what should be the happy issue of all his sufferings. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he mentions that to keep up their faith. When he spake of the cross and the shame, he spake in the same breath of the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, and trace in it the way to his glory; thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, and look through it to the recompense of reward. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.

He foretold his sufferings to show that they were produced by an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity, in pursuance of his own voluntary undertaking for our salvation; he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love, John 18. 4. He spake this to rectify the mistakes his disciples had imbibed concerning the external pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon dignity and authority in the world; but here Christ tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests and the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors. This would give them a more correct idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that their mistakes should be rectified. Those that follow Christ, must be warned not to expect great things in this world. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly.

Peter took offence at this; he said, Be it far from thee, Lord. He took him, and began to rebuke him. When God's dispensations are either intricate or cross to us, it becomes us silently to acquiesce in, and not to prescribe to the Divine will. This savoured much of fleshly wisdom. We are apt to look upon sufferings as they relate to this present life, to which they are uneasy; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, Rom. 8. 18. See how passionately

Peter speaks; Spare thyself—so it might be read—pity thyself, and then this shall not be to thee. He would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. He intimates, likewise, the improbability of it. This shall not be unto thee; it is impossible that one who hath so great an interest in the people should be crushed.

We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that Christ resented so much as this. Just now he had said, Blessed art thou, Simon; but here, Get thee behind me, Satan; and there was cause for both. He answered him as he did Satan himself, ch. 4. 10. It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. It concerns us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and depths, by standing always upon our guard against sin, who ever moves us to it. Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that dissuades from duty. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken. Whoever takes us off from that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language. We must be free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though under colour of kindness to us. Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence; not be parleyed with.

Thou art an offence to me—Thou art my hinderance; so it may be read; thou standest in my way. So strongly was Christ engaged for our redemption, that those who endeavoured to divert him from it, touched him in a very tender and sensible part. Peter was not so sharply reproved by words for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings, as he was for dissuading him from them. Our Lord Jesus preferred our salvation before his own ease and safety; for even Christ pleased not himself.

He called Peter, Satan, because whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil. While we mind christian duty as our way and work, and the Divine favour as our end and portion, we savour the things of God; but if these are minded, the flesh

must be denied, and hardships borne, and here is the trial, which of the two we savour. Those that fear, and decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God.

22. This controverted expression is best interpreted, "taking him by the hand;" an action naturally accompanying advice, remonstrance, or censure.—*Bloomfield.*

§ 74. Ver. 24—28. — *The necessity of self-denial.*

See what it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, Follow me. A true disciple of Christ is one that does follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him. He is one that aims at the same end which Christ aimed at, the glory of God; one that walks in the same way he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his guidance, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes, Rev. 14. 4. If any man will come—If any man be willing to come. It denotes deliberate choice, cheerfulness and resolution in that choice.

1. Let him deny himself. Peter had advised Christ to spare himself; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from sparing themselves, that they must deny themselves. His birth, and life and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, Phil. 2. 7, 8. If self-denial be a hard lesson, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction. All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves.

2. Let him take up his cross. The cross is here put for every trouble that befalls us. Troubles of christians are called crosses, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to. Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it. As each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burden. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. We are apt to think we could bear another cross better than our own; but that is best which is appointed us, and we ought to make the best of it. Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman

custom of compelling those condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross. It is supposed that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but accommodate ourselves to those God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are laid in our way. We have not only to bear the cross, a stock or a stone or a stick may do that, but improve it to some good advantage. We should not say, This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it; but, This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good. This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, will never have the heart to take up his cross. He that cannot take up a resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never likely to die a martyr.

3. Let him follow me. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end! and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, that we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. If any man will come after me, let him follow me. If any man will come after me, in profession, and so have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow me in truth, so do the work and duty of a disciple.

To enforce this, our Lord added two most important questions, which are supposed to have been proverbial among the Jews. What would that man be profited who should gain the possession of the whole world, all its riches, power, and splendour, who should lose his own life in doing it? Or, what could be deemed a sufficient price to be given a man in exchange for his life, if that were lost or forfeited? If then all worldly things are worthless when compared with the present life, how forcible the same argument with

respect to the soul and its state of eternal happiness or misery ! If a man should save his life, and gain the whole world by forsaking Christ, and thus lose the happiness of his soul, and secure its destruction, where would be his gain ? With what would he endeavour to redeem his forfeited happiness, or to rescue his soul from deserved misery ? The soul is the noblest work of God on earth, formed at first in his own image, possessed of vast and most valuable powers, capable of perfect happiness, or intense misery, and intended for eternal existence. Such a treasure every child of Adam possesses, but how few are sensible of its precious worth, or the danger of its being deprived of God's favour ! The souls of all men are thus lost, by transgression ; but, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, none will perish at last but the impenitent and unbelieving.

Yet thousands lose their souls for the most trivial gain, or the most worthless indulgence, nay, often from mere sloth and negligence. Whatever is the object for which men forsake Christ, that is the price at which Satan purchases their souls. Yet one soul is more worth than all the world. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter ; he knew the price of souls, for he redeemed them ; nor would he underrate the world, for he made it. The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interests by his care to secure and advance his temporal ones. But the dying transgressor cannot, with all his human treasure, purchase one hour's respite to seek mercy for his perishing soul ! Let us then learn rightly to value our souls, and Christ as the Saviour of them. What repeated instructions do we need to teach us to deny ourselves, and to copy the example of our suffering Redeemer, and to convince us that every disciple must have the spirit of a martyr, whether it be ever put to the trial or not.

Though Christ at this time appeared as the Son of man, in a state of humiliation, and was about to set them an example of suffering even unto death, he assured them that he would at length appear, displaying the Divine perfections.

His first coming was in the meanness of his children, who being partakers of flesh, he took part of the same ; but his second coming will be in the glory of his Father. At his first coming, he was at-

tended by poor disciples ; at his second coming, he will be attended by glorious angels ; if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

It speaks of the appearance of his kingdom upon his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to heaven, when the Spirit was poured down in an extraordinary manner, and the gospel, preached all over the world, confirmed by signs and wonders, and made effectual to the conversion and salvation of many souls. But it seems chiefly to have regard to his coming to show his regal power and authority in the destruction of the Jews ; when his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, were brought and slain before him. This the apostle John for one lived to witness.—(27.)

Let us learn to value our souls, and Christ as the Saviour. Let us fear coming short of his salvation, and continually anticipate the season when the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him, to reward every man according to his work. We, indeed, can merit nothing from him ; yet he will mercifully recompense the fruits of his own grace in us, and all our losses and sufferings for his sake ; but if any man draw back, his soul will have no pleasure in him. Though trials must come first, yet they will soon be over ; we shall soon behold our once suffering Saviour in his glory ; our taste of death will introduce us into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1-13. M. 9. 2-13. L. 9. 28-36.

Ver. 14-24. M. 9. 14-33. L. 9. 37-45.

§ 75 Ver. 1-13. *The transfiguration of Christ.*

Our Lord returned to a mountain to pray. It is supposed to have been mount Tabor, in the north of Galilee. He took Peter, James, and John with him, who witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter, and attended his agony in the garden. They were competent witnesses to testify of the fact. While engaged in prayer, he was transfigured before them, or changed into another form ; it is the word used by the apostle, Phil. 2. 6, 7. In the days of his flesh Christ took on him the form of a servant. He drew a veil over the glory of his Godhead ; but now the disciples beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, and had such a discovery of him in the form of God as they

were able to bear. He appeared like the Sun of righteousness; the Light of the world shone forth from behind the clouds, which commonly obscured his splendour. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed, reflected light; but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate, inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud. All his body was altered, so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses could be concealed by a veil; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it. This appearance would give the apostles some idea of the Divine glory which he had with the Father before he became flesh, and which was always inherent in him, though veiled under outward meanness. It was intended to support their faith, when they would have to witness his crucifixion, and would give them an idea of the glory prepared for them, when changed by his power to be like him.

Moses and Elias also appeared conversing with him of the painful death he shortly would suffer at Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the scriptures, and the great designs of mercy for which he came into the world. This would give the apostles a glimpse of the present happiness of departed believers. They likewise saw the great lawgiver of Israel, and the chief of the prophets, attending on Jesus, to honour him; in whose person and obedience to death the moral law was magnified, the ceremonial types fulfilled, and the prophecies accomplished.

The apostles were overcome by weariness, or by the splendour of the scene; but when roused, Peter was delighted, and exclaimed that it was most desirable to continue there, and to go no more down to meet the sufferings of which he was so unwilling to hear. In this he knew not what he said. We are entirely wrong, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims, such as we are in our best circumstances in this world, to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city; but Peter submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ. Whatever tabernacles we propose to make for ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave. That sacrifice was not yet offered,

without which Peter's sinful soul could not be saved; and important services were to be done by him and his brethren. He too much savoured the things of men, and was not ready for the spiritual happiness to which he aspired. His proposal rather expressed his feelings than his understanding.

While Peter spake, a bright cloud overshadowed them, an emblem of the Divine presence and glory. Not like the tremendous display at mount Sinai, nor the thick darkness by which the Lord took possession of the temple, but a bright cloud, denoting the introduction of a clearer and more encouraging discovery of the Divine glory by the gospel. From this cloud a voice was heard, like that at Christ's baptism, adding a command to hear him in preference even to Moses and the prophets. This glorious vision terrified the apostles as much as the preceding display of their Lord's glory delighted them. Ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear any thing immediately from God. They fell prostrate to the earth, till Jesus encouraged them; when looking round, they beheld only their Lord, left alone with them in his usual appearance. Christ's touches were often healing, and here they were strengthening and comforting. It is Christ by his word and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up believers from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it. Arise, be not afraid. Causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. Christ's errand into the world, was to give comfort to his people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, Luke 1. 74, 75.

The next day, as they came down from the mount, Jesus charged them not to mention this animating and instructive event till after his resurrection. They asked on what grounds the scribes had taught that Elijah was to come before the Messiah appeared, probably desiring to know whether what they had beheld was intended by the prophet Malachi. He replied that Elijah in fact had come, and the people and scribes had not known him, but had



persecuted and put him to death as they would do the Messiah. Thus the disciples clearly perceived that John Baptist had been foretold under the name of Elijah, in whose spirit he had come, and whom he resembled in his disposition and work.

Let us ever remember that discoveries of the Redeemer's majesty tend to give a right understanding of his abasement. Could we now behold that sacred countenance, which once for our sins, was disfigured with blood and spitting, we should behold it more glorious than the noon-day sun. We should no longer see him crowned with thorns, hanging on the cross betwixt the thieves, but arrayed with light as a garment, surrounded with glorified saints and angels, celebrating his praises. But how dull are our understandings, and how drowsy our minds, when we would contemplate such a subject! Yet when by faith we get a glimpse of our Redeemer's glory, our hearts begin to glow with love and joy, we would always continue in that pleasing frame. But in this there is ignorance of what is needful for us, as well as some knowledge of what constitutes real happiness. These glimpses and foretastes are vouchsafed to prepare us for, and to support us under tribulations. We must pass through varied experiences in our way to glory, and spend our lives in services for the honour of Christ, and the good of his people. We know not what we shall be, save that when the Saviour shall appear, we shall be like him; and as our bodies must be changed by his almighty power, so our souls must be transformed by his renewing grace. Blessed be God, there is a mount of everlasting glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, when the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.

11. *Gill* considers that the truest sense of this is to be learned from *Mt.* 4. 6, He shall restore, that is, he shall turn all things, &c., and as this is explained, *Luke* 1. 17, He shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. This is other and better work than what the Jews assign to their Elias, whom they expect to be a restorer of all things in their way. They pretend that he is now very busy writing down every thing, so that when he comes he will be able to give an account of all things; and it is common for them

to say, when any doubt or difficulty arises, Let it be left till Elias comes.

{ 76. Ver. 14—21. *Jesus casts out a dumb and deaf spirit.*

We have here the miraculous cure of a child that was lunatic and vexed with a devil. The affliction of children cannot but affect tender parents. And the case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. The father, in his complaint, saith, He is lunatic, taking notice of the effect; but Christ, in the cure, rebuked the devil, and so struck at the cause. Thus he does in spiritual cures. He gave his disciples power to cast out devils; yet at this time they failed, though there were nine of them together, and before a great multitude. Christ permitted this, to show their dependence upon him, that without him they could do nothing, and thus he glorified himself and his own power.

Christ rebuked those about him. This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people. It was here owing to the faithlessness of this generation, that they could not obtain the blessings from God; as it was owing to the weakness of the disciples' faith, that they could not do those works for God, which otherwise they might have done. The faithlessness and perverseness of those who enjoy the means of grace, are a great grief to the Lord Jesus. The longer Christ has borne with a perverse and faithless people, the more he is displeased with their perverseness and unbelief. This is the reason of our ill success in our conflicts with our lusts and temptations, and in our efforts to do good. He cured the child. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, may confide in him, and in his power and goodness.

See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer. He breaks the power of Satan. Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word. Satan cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ, though his possession has been long. He redresses the grievances of the children of men. It was an immediate cure, and a perfect one. This is an encouragement to parents to bring children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring

them to the word of Christ, the ordinary means by which Satan's strongholds are demolished in the soul. Christ's rebukes, brought home to the heart, will ruin Satan's power there.

The disciples ask the reason why they could not cast out the devil at this time. Ministers have need to keep up private communion with Christ, that they may in secret, where no eye sees, bewail their weakness and straitness, their follies and infirmities, in their public performances, and inquire into the cause of them. Such questions as the disciples put to Christ, we should put to ourselves.

Christ gives reasons why they failed.

1. It was because of their unbelief. Though they had faith, yet that faith was weak and ineffectual. As far as faith falls short of due strength, vigour, and activity, it may truly be said, There is unbelief. Many are chargeable with unbelief, yet not to be called unbelievers. Because of our unbelief we bring so little to pass in religion, and so often come short in that which is good.

Our Lord Jesus takes this occasion to show them the power of faith; If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall do wonders. If you had but a grain of true faith, though so little, that it were only like the least of all seeds, you would do wonders. Faith in general is a firm assent to, a compliance with, and a confidence in all Divine revelation. The faith here required, had for its object the particular revelation by which Christ gave his disciples power to work miracles in his name. for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached. It was a faith in this in which they were defective. They had not then such actual dependence upon, and confidence in the promise of Christ's presence with them, as they should have had. It is good for us to be diffident of ourselves and of our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ when we distrust any power derived from him, or granted by him. If ye have ever so little of this faith in sincerity, if ye truly rely upon the powers committed to you, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove. This is a proverbial expression, denoting that which follows; "Nothing shall be impossible to you."

2. There was something in the malady which rendered the cure more than ordinarily difficult. This possession is not cast out but by great acts of devotion;

therein they were defective. The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to greater intenseness, and more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it. Fasting and prayer are proper means for bringing down Satan's power against us, and bringing Divine power to our assistance. Fasting puts an edge upon prayer, it is an evidence and instance of that humiliation which is necessary in prayer, and is a means of mortifying some corrupt habits, and of disposing the body to serve the soul in prayer. When the devil's interest in the soul is confirmed by the temper and constitution of the body, fasting must be joined with prayer, to keep under the body.

As the success depended upon the strength and simplicity of their believing reliance on Christ, the fasting and prayer could only be considered as proper means for increasing the holy affections of the soul, with which the exercise of faith in such cases must be connected; and the spirit of the instruction is as applicable to us now, in our personal conflicts and public services.

Do we wonder to see Satan's bodily possession of this young man from a child, when we see his spiritual possession of every son of Adam from a longer date? We are all by nature the sons of wrath. He hath right to us in our first birth; but our new birth acquits us from him, and cuts off all our claim. And if this poor soul, from an infant, were thus miserably handled, having done no actual evil, how just cause have we to fear the like judgments, who by our many foul offences deserve that the executioner come upon us!—(34.)

§ 77. Ver. 22, 23. *Jesus again foretells his sufferings and resurrection.*

Christ here foretells his own sufferings—that he should be betrayed and killed. He perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, yet undertook the work of our redemption, which greatly commends his love. He tells them that he should be betrayed into the hands of men. He shall be delivered up; it might be understood of his Father's delivering him up by his determined counsel and foreknowledge, Acts 2. 23; Rom. 8. 32; but as we render it, it refers to Judas' betraying him to the priests and the Romans. They should kill him; nothing less would satisfy their rage; it was his

blood, his precious blood, that they thirsted after. Nothing less would satisfy God's justice, and answer Christ's undertaking. If he be a Sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed; without blood there is no remission. Still he spake not only of his death, but of his resurrection; the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. This was an encouragement, not only to him, but to his disciples; for if he rise the third day, his absence from them will not be long, and his return to them will be glorious. What a varied scene of outward debasement and Divine glory was the life of the Redeemer! Yet all his humiliation ended in his exaltation. Let us learn to endure the cross, to despise riches and worldly honours, and to be content with his will concerning us.

The disciples were exceedingly sorry. Herein appeared their love to their Master's person, but their ignorance and mistake concerning his undertaking. They greatly lamented it, as it would be their own loss, their Master's grief, and the sin and ruin of them that did it.

§ 78. Ver. 24—27. *Jesus works a miracle to pay the tribute money.*

This tribute seems to have been the half-shekel collected for the temple service, Exod. 30. 12. It was not so strictly exacted then as sometimes it had been, especially not in Galilee. This tax paid to the temple is called an atonement for the soul, Exod. 30. 45. Christ, that in every thing he might appear in the likeness of sinners, paid it, though he had no sin to atone for. Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness, ch. 3. 15. He did this, to set us an example of rendering to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, Rom. 13. 7, and of contributing to the support of the public worship of God in the places where we are. If we reap spiritual things, it is fit that we should return carnal things. We must take care not to use our liberty as a cloak of covetousness or maliciousness, 1 Pet. 2. 16. If Christ pay tribute who can pretend exemption?

Peter felt sure that his Master was ready to do what was right. Christ anticipated him, to give him proof of his omniscience, and that no thought can be withholden from him. The disciples of Christ are never attacked without his knowledge. Jesus inquired of him, before he could mention the subject, whether

king levied taxes from their own families or their subjects. By this Christ intimated, that, as the Son of God, he was Lord of the temple, of whom all its services were typical, so that he could not rightly be called upon for expenses which benefited those who were strangers. Thus Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misimproved to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like disowning it himself.

God's children are freed by grace and adoption from the slavery of sin and Satan, but not from their subjection to civil magistrates in civil things. Therein the law of Christ is express; Let every soul, sanctified souls not excepted, be subject to the higher powers. Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's. Yet lest any should deem his refusal a disregard of the temple worship, he waved his privilege, and pointed out a miraculous way to obtain the required supply. We must never decline our duty for fear of giving offence: Christ's preaching and miracles offended them, yet he went on with them; but we must sometimes deny ourselves in that which is our secular interest, rather than give offence, as Paul, 1 Cor. 8. 13; Rom. 14. 13. The other disciples seem not to have been then present.

This proof of Christ's outward poverty is very affecting. However the money was lodged in the fish, Omniscience alone could know it, and Omnipotence alone could bring it to Peter's hook. Had Christ pleased, all the treasures in the depths of the seas, and in the heart of the earth, might have been laid at his feet. His poverty was voluntary, as our suffering Surety; it takes away the reproach of that condition, and should reconcile his people to that state, while the poor believer should be ever ready to pay tribute and custom, and trust to his Lord to defray the expense. And the fishers of men, though poor, may go on cheerfully in their work; for the Lord will, when necessary, bring such to them as shall be both able and willing to support his cause.

The power and the poverty of Christ should be mentioned together. If called by providence to the poverty of our Lord, let us trust in his power, and our God shall supply all our need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. In the way of obedience, in the course, perhaps, of our usual calling, as he helped Peter, so

he will help us. And if any sudden call should occur, which we are not prepared to meet, let us not apply to others, till we have first applied to our Master, Christ.—(74.)

The tribute money was a didrachm; the coin found in the fish was a stater, twice that value. *Males* considers this was the poll-tax levied by the Romans; and that Christ referred to Herod and Pilate as then kings of that land. *Lightfoot* considers that it was the sacred tribute, but says, If any understand it of the tax paid to the Romans we do not contend, and then the question would imply, "Is your Master of the sect of Judas of Galilee?" who resisted payment of that impost: see Acts 5. 37.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1-9. M. 9. 33-47. L. 9. 46-50.

§ 79. Ver. 1-6. *The importance of humility.*

Pride and ambition are deeply rooted in our fallen nature; so that they remain, and often break forth, even in those who are born of God. But as there never was a greater pattern of humility, so there never was a greater preacher of it, than Christ; he took all occasions to command it, and to commend it to his disciples and followers.

The occasion of this discourse concerning humility, was an unbecoming contest among the disciples for precedence. The notion, common to all the Jews, that the Messiah would erect a temporal kingdom, they still clung to, and never laid aside, till fully enlightened at the descent of the Holy Spirit.—(75.)

Christ spake many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet they fasten upon that, and overlook the other; and instead of asking how they might have strength and grace to suffer with him, they ask, Who shall be highest in reigning with him? Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble; and we are very apt to amuse and humour ourselves, with foolish fancies of things that will never be.

The dispute arose from error and ambition; it had no reference to growth in grace and real eminence in the spiritual kingdom on earth. It may also be remarked, that if our Lord had ever intended any pre-eminence in authority to Peter and his successors, he would now have given some intimation of it; but, on the contrary, he disapproved all such pretensions in the most decided terms.

He set a little child before them, solemnly assuring them, that unless they

were converted and rendered like little children, they could not enter his kingdom, and that he who most humbled himself would be found the most excellent and honourable. Children, when very young, do not aspire after authority, they willingly associate with their inferiors, do not regard outward distinctions, are devoid of malice, docile, willingly dependent on their parents, and believe what they are told. It is true that they soon begin to show other propensities, and other ideas are taught them at an early age; but these are characteristic marks of childhood, and render them proper emblems of the lowly and tractable dispositions which constitute the excellence of true christianity. This was intended to show the disciples, that they still needed a great change in respect of their ambition and carnal emulation, so that they were unfit for the meanest station in the kingdom of heaven. It also shows us that a spirit of domineering is contrary to christianity, and that without the conversion which humility and a spiritual mind indicate, no man can be a real christian, a lesson which most of Christ's nominal disciples seem to overlook. Humble disciples are the most fit representatives of the meek and lowly Saviour. We must be converted, we must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper; must have other thoughts, both of ourselves and of the kingdom of heaven, before we are fit for a place in it. Whoever is kind to such a servant of Christ, and listens to his instructions, in effect receives Christ himself, and every one should dread the ensnaring or injuring such humble disciples, more than the most disgraceful death. The irresistible, irrevocable doom of the great Judge will sink an offender sooner and more surely, and bind faster, than a mill-stone hanged about the neck.

Surely we need to be daily renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become simple and humble, as little children, and willing to be the last of all. Unless we have some measure of this disposition, we must not account ourselves subjects of Christ; while he who has made most proficiency in this lesson of self-abasement, is, in fact, the greatest in the kingdom of grace, and will shine brightest in the kingdom of glory. Let us daily study this subject, and examine our own spirits, that we may be more and more cast into the mould of the gospel.

§ 79. Ver. 7-14. *Caution against offences.*

Our Lord proceeded to speak more concerning offences; meaning not only those injuries by which men discourage his disciples, and bring guilt upon themselves, but all those evils which prejudice men against his religion, as the idolatries and superstitions which exist at the present day, also the bitter controversies agitated among those who agree in the principal doctrines of the gospel. In the present state of human nature these offences exist, but woe to those whose conduct makes others to stumble.

Not that Christ's word necessitates any man to offend, but it is a prediction upon a view of the causes. Considering the subtilty and malice of Satan, the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, and the foolishness that is found there, it is morally impossible but that there should be offences; and God permits them for wise and holy ends, that both those who are perfect, and those who are not, may be made manifest. Being told before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and many bad examples, let us stand upon our guard. How dreadful will be the disappointment of selfish, self-indulgent professors, who, taking it for granted they are themselves safe, and caring nothing about the souls of others, prove occasions of their ruin!

We must part with whatever is dear to us, when it proves to be an occasion of sin unto us. Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, often prove snares, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty. In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled by it in sin. Corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; beloved lusts must be abandoned with abhorrence. The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we put as great violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye.

If we live after the flesh, we must die; having no breaches made upon the body of sin, inbred corruption, we shall be cast into hell-fire. If we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live; that is meant by our entering into life maimed, that is, the body of sin is

maimed; and it is but maimed at the best, while we are in this world.

Such as are strong, or think themselves so, are apt to undervalue and despise weak disciples, when they see them mistaken or confused, though this may often be the effect of humility. Christ therefore cautions that the least of those who profess to be his disciples should not be despised. Angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, Heb. 1. 14, and weak believers are their special charge. They always enjoy the favour of God, yet do not deem attention to the new convert, or poor despised believer, any degradation. And should their brethren on earth despise those whom angels delight to attend upon?

We ought not to inquire too curiously into the nature of the Divine administration, but we may certainly collect from this passage the doctrine of a particular providence.—(36.)

Christ also declared that he, the Son of man, whom they knew to be the Son of God, came into the world to save the lost. He did not despise them, even when dead in sin, nay, when strangers and enemies to him; and did he stoop so low to save them, and should they despise their weak brethren whom he was bringing home to himself? He added a parable, showing that one stray sheep would engage a man's attention more than ninety and nine which remained in the pasture. This shows the exposed, helpless condition of perishing sinners. Having wandered from God, they are liable to be destroyed by Satan, and to fall into hell. It also shows how the Good Shepherd knows and values his chosen flock; that he seeks for them before they seek for Him; that he rejoices in saving them, and will suffer none of them to perish.

Christ came into the world to save souls, and his heart is so much upon this work, that he will reckon severely with those who hinder it, by obstructing the progress of them that are setting their faces heavenward.

And shall any of us refuse attention to those whom the Son of God came to seek and to save? concerning whom it is the will of the Father that not one of them shall perish? If we have been as lost sheep, but are ransomed by the blood of the Good Shepherd, and brought back by his care, let us remember from what a state we have been saved, and seek to be such as the sheep of his pasture should

be. This care extends itself to every member of the flock, even the meanest. We may think that if but one or two are offended and ensnared, it is no great matter, we need not mind it; but God's thoughts of love and tenderness are above ours. Those who do anything by which any of these little ones are brought into danger of perishing, contradict the will of God, and highly provoke him; and though they cannot prevail in it, yet they will be reckoned with for it.

Christ calls God, ver. 10, 19, My Father which is in heaven; he calls him, ver. 14, Your Father which is in heaven; intimating that he is not ashamed to call his poor disciples, brethren: I ascend to my Father, and your Father, John 20. 17; therefore ours because his. This intimates likewise the ground of the safety of his little ones: that God is their Father; He is therefore inclined to succour them. A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones.

§ 9. If interpreted literally, this would be directly at variance with the sixth commandment. It must, consequently, be understood figuratively. —T. H. Horne.

10. The general belief of the Jews (also of the early christians) is here adverted to, that every person, at least the good, had his attendant angel, Heb. 1. 14. They regarded this angelic attendant as the representative of the person, as attending him, and even standing in the same favour with God as the person himself; in accordance with the oriental custom, by which none were allowed to see the monarch but those in especial favour with him.—Blountfield.

§ 79. Ver. 15-20. *The removal of offences.*

Contentions among christians set the world against the gospel. As they must arise in this world among those who are liable both to give cause for anger and to be angry without cause, our Lord prescribed some rules for stopping the progress of these contentions, and preventing their effects. If a professed christian is injured by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him the injustice of his conduct. This would generally produce the desired effect with a true christian, and the parties would be reconciled. But if this fail, the offended party is next to take with him one or two other christian friends, who may bear witness to what passes, and if they deem the person to be in fault, and he refuses to hearken to them, then it will be necessary to declare the matter to the church, the teachers and professors

of the gospel, that those who have done the injury may be reproved by them. Those should think it high time to repent and reform, who see their misconduct become a general offence and scandal. If he still refuse to submit, he is to be shunned by believers till he gives token of repentance. The principles of these rules may be practised under different forms of church government, though they are too much neglected by all. Our Lord added a solemn assurance that such proceedings would be ratified in heaven, if according to truth and equity.

How careful should all christians be to preserve the peace as well as the purity of the church! But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples! Corrupt maxims and customs prevent even conscientious men from speaking privately to their offending brethren; hence contentions and even lawsuits among professors of the gospel; and hence mutual criminations and appeals to the world, to the scandal of religion and the triumph of its enemies. Surely we should prefer gaining and reconciling a brother to obtaining a victory over him, or exposing his character; and harsh means should not be adopted till milder ones have been tried without success.

In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God in this respect. All public concerns of families and of churches should be conducted with united as well as secret prayer; nor should we ever censure a man without praying for his salvation. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider Him as present in the midst of us, that we may feel awe of him, and be encouraged to expect blessings from him. He says not, I will be, but, I am; referring to his Divine presence at all times and in all places, and to his special presence by the influence of his Spirit to communicate blessings. This is a direct assertion of his omnipresent Deity, that he is God present every where.

15-17. Throughout the whole of this context, there is not one word said about disobeying the determination of the catholic church concerning a disputed doctrine, but about slighting the admonition of a particular church concerning known sin; and all allow that particular churches are fallible.—T. H. Horne.

§ 79. Ver. 21-35. *Conduct towards brethren—The parable of the unmerciful servant.*

Peter wished to know how often they were to renew their forgiveness to those

who repeated the offence. With reference to traditions of the elders, he asked whether they were to proceed till seven times. Our Lord's answer showed that they ought to forgive to an indefinite number.

While we live so entirely on mercy and forgiveness, how backward are we to forgive the repeated offences of our brethren! There is a proneness in our corrupt nature to stint ourselves in that which is good, and to fear doing too much in religion, particularly of forgiving too much, though we have so much forgiven us.

Christ answers by stating a certain number for an indefinite one. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps. 78. 38, 40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries. This is enforced by a parable, which represents the church and the administration of the gospel dispensation in it. God is our Master; his servants we are, at least in profession and obligation. The parable intimates how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are. It represents the Lord as requiring of men an account of the use they have made of their abilities and advantages, in their conduct towards him and to each other, especially as this distinguishes the true christian from the false professor.

There are three things in the parable :

1. The master's wonderful clemency. Every sin we commit is a debt to God. God now reckons with us by our own consciences. There is another day of reckoning coming, when nothing but the blood of Christ will balance the account. The debt was ten thousand talents, a vast sum ; a king's ransom, more likely, than a servant's debt. See what our sins are ; for the heinousness of their nature ; they are talents, the greatest denomination that ever was used in account of money or weight. Observe the vastness of their number ; they are ten thousand. Who can understand the number of his errors, or tell how oft he offends? Ps. 19. 12. The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it. Silver and gold would not pay our debt, Ps. 49. 6, 7. Sacrifice and offering would not do it ; our good works are but God's work in us, and cannot make satisfaction ; we are without strength, and cannot help ourselves.

Justice demands satisfaction. The servant had contracted this debt by his wastefulness and wilfulness, and therefore might

justly be punished. See here what every sin deserves ; this is the wages of sin ; to be sold as a slave. He that is sold for a bond-slave, is deprived of all his comforts ; which is the case of condemned sinners. Thus he would have payment to be made, that is, something done towards it ; though it is impossible that the sale of one so worthless, should amount to the payment of so great a debt.

Convinced sinners cannot but humble themselves before God, and pray for mercy. The servant's address was very submissive, and very importunate. Sinners are commonly careless about the pardon of their sins, till they come under the arrest of some awakening word, some startling providence, or approaching death. How easily, how quickly God can bring the proudest sinner to his feet ! The stoutest heart will fail, when God sets its sins in order before it.

Patience and forbearance are a great favour, but it is folly to think that these alone will save. The servant promises payment. It is the folly of many who are under convictions of sin, to imagine they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him. See how close pride sticks, even to awakened sinners ; they are convinced, but not humbled. The God of infinite mercy is very ready, out of pure compassion, to forgive the sins of those that humble themselves before him. The servant's prayer was, Have patience with me ; the master's grant is a full discharge. The pardon of sin is owing to the mercy of God, to his tender mercy. God looked with pity on mankind in general, because miserable, and sent his Son to be a Surety for them ; he looks with pity on particular penitents, because sensible of their misery, their hearts broken and contrite, and he accepts them in the Beloved. There is forgiveness with God for the greatest sins, if they are repented of. The forgiving of the debt is the loosing of the debtor ; we never walk at liberty till our sins are forgiven. But observe, though he discharged him from the penalty as a debtor, he did not discharge him from his duty as a servant. The pardon of sin does not slacken, but strengthens our obligations to obedience ; and we must reckon it a favour that God is pleased to continue such wasteful servants as we have been, in such gainful service as his.

2. The servant's unreasonable severity.

toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him. This represents the sin of those who are unmerciful in demanding their own. See how very small the debt, compared with the ten thousand talents his lord forgave him—only a hundred pence. Offences done to men are nothing compared with those committed against God. Not that we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but we should not aggravate our neighbour's wronging us, nor study revenge. How severe the demand! Proud and angry men think, if the matter of their demand be just, that it will bear them out, though the manner of it be cruel and unmerciful; but it will not. What needed this violence? How submissive the debtor was; the poor man's request was, Have patience with me. He honestly confesses the debt, and only begs time. As we must not be hard, so we must not be hasty in our demands, but think how long God bears with us. How implacable and furious the creditor was! He would not have patience, but without mercy cast his fellow-servant into prison.

The rest of the servants were much concerned. The sins and sufferings of our fellow-servants should be matter of grief and trouble to us. They came and told their lord. That which gives us occasion for sorrow, should give us occasion for prayer. Let our complaints both of the wickedness of the wicked, and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him.

3. Observe, how the master reproved his servant's cruelty. Unmercifulness is great wickedness. He upbraids him with the mercy he had found. Those who will use God's favours, shall never be upbraided with them; but those that abuse them may expect it. Consider, it was all that debt, that great debt. The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy: we should think how much has been forgiven us, Luke 7, 47. The master thence shows him the obligation he was under to be merciful to his fellow-servant. It is justly expected that such as have received mercy, should show mercy. From what we have felt ourselves, we can better have fellow feeling with our brethren. He should have been more conformable to the example of his master's tenderness, having himself experienced it. The comfortable sense of pardoning mercy tends

much to dispose our hearts to forgive our brethren. It was in the close of the day of atonement, that the jubilee-trumpet sounded a release of debts, Lev. 25, 9; for we must have compassion on our brethren, as God has on us.

The master revoked his pardon. He delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto himself. We are not to suppose that God actually forgives men, and afterwards imputes their guilt to them for their final condemnation; but it shows the false conclusions many draw concerning their sins being pardoned, though their after conduct shows that they never entered into the spirit, or experienced the sanctifying grace of the gospel. The power of God's wrath to ruin us, goes far beyond the utmost extent of any creature's strength and wrath. The reproaches and terrors of the sinner's own conscience will be his tormentors, for it is a worm that dies not; devils, the executioners of God's wrath, that are sinners' tempters now, will be their tormentors for ever.

Here is the application of the whole parable. If God's government be fatherly, it follows thence that it is righteous; but it does not therefore follow, that under his government we must not be kept in awe by fear of the Divine wrath. We do not forgive our offending brother aright, or acceptably, if we do not forgive from the heart, for God looks at that. No malice must be harboured there, no projects of revenge, or desires of it. Yet this is not enough; we must endeavour the welfare even of those who offend us.

We have intimations enough in scripture, for caution to the presumptuous; and yet we have security enough for comfort to those who are sincere, that the one may fear, and the other may hope. Those who do not forgive their brother's trespasses, never truly repented of their own, nor ever truly believed the gospel; and therefore that which is taken away, is only what they seemed to have, Luke 8, 18. It is indispensably necessary to pardon and peace, that we not only do justly, but love mercy. It is an essential part of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father, of that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated. How will they answer, who, though they bear the christian name, persist in unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the laws of Christ



might be dispensed with for gratifying their unbridled passions?

The humbled sinner relies only on free, abounding mercy, through the ransom of the death of Christ. His sins are thus blotted out, while his conduct towards others proves him a partaker of the Spirit or mind of Christ. Let us then seek more and more for the renewing grace of God, to teach us to forgive others as we hope for forgiveness from him.

24, 28. A myriad of talents—the highest number used in Greek numeration, and here used to express a sum inconceivably large. A hundred pence, or denarii, it is calculated, would be about the six hundred thousandth part of that sum.

25. It was customary in ancient Rome, and in many countries both in Europe and Asia, that the family of an insolvent debtor should become the slaves of the creditor, or be sold for his advantage.

31. Imprisonment is a much greater punishment in the east than with us. Prisoners are completely at the mercy of the jailer, who often is paid to treat them with severity, and even to torment them.

The word rendered tormentor, denotes one who has authority to examine and extort a confession by torture.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1-12. M. 10. 1-12.  
Ver. 13-15. M. 10. 13-16. L. 18. 15-17.  
Ver. 16-30. M. 10. 17-31. L. 18. 18-30.

§ 103. Ver. 1, 2. *Jesus enters Judea.*

Christ left Galilee. He had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote, despicable part of the country; it was only on occasion of the feasts that he came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there. It was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, the least refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought in Galilee; but having finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and it was his final farewell. He came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan, that they might have their day of visitation as well as Galilee, for they also belonged to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Great multitudes followed him. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. They found him as able and ready to help there, as he had been in Galilee; wherever this Sun of righteousness arose, it was with healing under his wings.

§ 103. Ver. 3-12. *The pharisees question Jesus about divorces.*

The pharisees had heard that Jesus opposed their decisions concerning divorces,

and were desirous of drawing something from him which they might represent as contrary to the law of Moses. Matrimonial cases have been numerous, and sometimes intricate and perplexed; made so, not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often in these cases people resolve, before they ask what they will do. They asked, respecting divorce, May it be done, as it commonly was done, by the looser sort of people, for any cause that a man shall think fit to assign, though ever so frivolous? Jesus replied to their insidious question, by inquiring whether they had not read the account of the creation, and the original institution of marriage; intimating, that every departure therefrom was wrong. God, in the appointment of marriage, united them to have the same interests, and to share each other's comforts and sorrows. God hath yoked them together, so the word is, and it is very significant. When marriage was instituted, sin and death had not entered; therefore, neither the sinful cause of separation, nor the natural dissolution, were referred to, and in all other respects the union is to be considered as indissoluble. As they referred to what Moses had directed respecting a writing of divorcement, he showed them that this was not a command, but a permission, a mere judicial regulation, a departure from the meaning of the moral law, on account of the hardness of their hearts. Corruptions that have crept into any ordinance of God, must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. Thus, when St. Paul would redress the grievances in the church of Corinth about the Lord's supper, he appealed to the appointment, 1 Cor. 11. 23. Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore inquire for the good old way, Jer. 6. 16, and must reform, not by later patterns, but by ancient rules. Also Christ made it to appear, that under the christian dispensation both husband and wife were upon the same level as to seeking divorce.

The disciples had the general ideas of their countrymen, and supposed that these regulations would tend to render marriage a perpetual source of uneasiness, and there would be most happiness in continuing unmarried. Our Lord replied, that many could not live conscientiously and comfortably in a single state. Some, however, were such; and if any found him-

self disposed to a single life, he might be the more useful in promoting the kingdom of God among men. Yet for the most part, it was better for themselves and for society that they should marry; but whatever they might choose for themselves, they must impose no restrictions on others. That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and kept to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to prepare us for, and preserve us to the kingdom of heaven.

When the gospel is really embraced, it renders men affectionate relatives and faithful friends; it teaches them to bear the burdens, and to bear with the infirmities of those with whom they are connected, to consider their peace and happiness more than their own. The true christian considers his wife as the gift or appointment of God, and his union with her as a Divine ordinance. He will not want a separation on every incidental uneasiness. He will consider every deviation from the regulations of God's word as a source of temptation and uneasiness, and that the view of the marriage union as indissoluble, gives the surest motives for seeking peace and mutual harmony. As to ungodly persons, it is proper that their passions should be restrained by laws, not to injure the peace of society.

And we learn that this state should be entered upon with great seriousness and earnest prayer. That such a union should not be formed with one whose beauty or wealth are her chief recommendations; and especially that christians should be careful that they are not unequally yoked with unbelievers.

3. For every cause; or, for any thing whatever that may be disagreeable in her. The easiness with which divorces were procured among the Jews, and their levity in dissolving the sacred union, is stated by many writers. *Josephus* himself records that he divorced his wife, though the mother of three children, because he was dissatisfied with her, or, as he himself expresses it, "because she did not find favour in his eyes;" in fact, when he saw a woman that pleased him better. This question respecting divorce was disputed among the pharisees themselves. The school of Hillel maintained the easiness of divorce; that of Shammai the reverse.—See *Lightfoot*, &c.

12. This is meant of an unaptness for marriage, not in body, which some, through mistake of this scripture, have foolishly and wickedly brought upon themselves, but in mind. Those who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God's grace, wholly to abstain from them, and have subdued all desires toward them—these are they that can receive this saying; and yet these are not to bind themselves by a

vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.—*Henry*. Some consider that here is a reference to the sect called Essenes.

104. Ver. 13—15. *Young children brought to Jesus, and he blesses them.*

We have here the welcome Christ gave to some little children that were brought to him. They were so little as to be taken up in arms. Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should bring all they have influence upon to him likewise. They did a kindness to these children, not doubting they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus. Others brought their children to Christ to be healed; these only desired a blessing for them. It is well when we come to Christ ourselves and bring our children before we are driven to him by necessity; not only to visit him when in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in general dependence on him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used, especially in paternal blessing. It intimates something of love and familiarity, mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession. Therefore they should be brought to him. We cannot do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be wrought upon, and prayed for by him. We can but beg a blessing for them: Christ only can command the blessing.

The disciples reproved this as impertinent and troublesome. Either, they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular ailed them; or, they thought he had toil enough with his other work. It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing, well-meaning souls, in their inquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If he do not break the bruised reed, we should not. Those that seek Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men.

Our Lord Jesus rebuked the disciples; Suffer little children, and forbid them not; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, saying, Of such is the kingdom of

heaven. Having participated in the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, they must share in the riches of the second Adam's grace. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out. Therefore he takes it ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received.

The expression also may intimate that the kingdom of heavenly glory is greatly constituted of such as die when infants. There is abundant reason to conclude that all who have not lived to commit actual transgressions, though they share in the effects of the first Adam's offence, will also share in the blessings of the second Adam's gracious covenant, without their personal faith and obedience, but not without the regenerating influence of the Spirit of Christ on their souls.

And all christians should bring their children to their gracious Saviour that he may bless them with all his spiritual blessings. Whether they deem it right to devote their infant offspring to Him in baptism, or form other conclusions on that subject, all certainly should agree in giving them up to Him, and bringing them up for Him. And if christians have their beloved branches croot in the bud, they cannot have cause to complain, nor think much of care, pain, and trouble, when they are made instruments of God in raising up children to him, who may inherit his everlasting kingdom.

He did as he was desired; he laid his hands on them, that is, he blessed them. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended of him, Phil. 3. 12; not so much by knowing God as by being known of him, Gal. 4. 9; and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

Observe, when he had done this, he departed thence. As if he reckoned he had done enough there, when he had thus asserted the rights of the lambs of his flock.

105. Ver. 18-22 *The rich young man's inquiry.*

The young person here mentioned was a ruler. He was very amiable in his moral character, had serious thoughts of religion, and an honourable opinion of Christ. With much apparent earnestness he inquired what good thing he might do, that he might have eternal

life. The question may at first seem like the inquiry, What must I do to be saved? But our Lord saw that his judgment was wrong, and his heart unhumiliated and carnal. He at first objected to his giving him, whom he supposed to be mere man, the title of good; as all mere men are evil in themselves, and none is absolutely good, but the one living and true God, the Fountain and perfection of goodness and excellence. This noted to him that he did not properly feel the evil of his own heart, or the dignity of the person he thus addressed, to whom the title of "good" belonged in a far higher sense than he supposed. Christ will have this young man either know him to be God, or not call him good; to teach us to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time given to us. Do any call us good? Let us tell them all goodness is from God, therefore not to us, but to him give glory.

Christ then directed him to keep the commandments, if he meant to enter into life by the things he should do. Keeping the commandments includes faith in Jesus Christ, for that is the great commandment, 1 John 3, 23. This direction was well fitted for his case; the knowledge of the holy law is the proper cure of a self-justifying spirit, it shows the deficiencies and sinfulness of all human obedience, for a perfect obedience to them all is the condition of the covenant of works. Our Lord pointed out the commandments of the second table, and summed them up in the rule of loving our neighbour as ourselves. The young ruler, regardless of the first table, and ignorant of the spiritual import of the second, answered he had kept them all. To this ignorant answer he added an inquiry, what further was needed to complete his righteousness.

That query, What lack I yet? perhaps was not so much a desire of further instruction, as a demand of the praise of his present fancied perfection, and a challenge to Christ himself, to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient. Our Lord's reply at once proved him far distant from the righteousness of the law, and the temper required by the gospel. Had he loved his neighbour as himself, and believed that Jesus spoke with Divine authority, he would have disposed of his wealth at Christ's command. And had he been a humbled sinner, earnestly seeking mercy and eternal life as the gift of God, through the Saviour, he would

readily have left all to follow him; but the event proved that his wealth was dearer to him than Christ or his own soul. This command our Lord intended as a touchstone to discover him to himself. Though reluctant to give up hopes of eternal life, he would not at that time part with his riches for the sake of it.

Christ knew that covetousness was the sin which most easily beset this young man; that, though what he possessed he had got honestly, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this he discovered his insincerity. This command was like the call to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, to a land that will show thee. We must depend upon what we hope for in the other world, as an abundant recompense for all we have left or lost, or laid out for God in this world; Thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke pleasant and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of this young man's faith, as the precept was of his charity and contempt of the world.

We must devote ourselves entirely to the conduct and government of our Lord Jesus; Come, and follow me. It seems here to be meant of a close and constant attendance upon his person, such as the selling of what he had in the world was as necessary to, as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of us it is required in following Christ, that we duly attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposal; and all this from a principle of love to him, and dependence on him, and with a holy contempt of every thing else in comparison of him, and much more in competition with him. This is to follow Christ fully. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing.

The gospel is the only remedy for lost sinners. Many abstain from gross vices who remain inattentive to their obligations to God. They rest in the outward letter of the commandments, when thousands of instances of disobedience in thought, word, and deed, are marked against them in the book of God. It is well to point self-sufficient inquirers more and more to their duty, according to the spiritual extent of the law of God. This may lead them to the knowledge of their

own hearts; and no unregenerate man will comply with the precepts of the law, or the demands of Christ, when fairly put to the trial. Thus numbers forsake him, loving this present world; they have their convictions and desires, and they depart sorrowful, perhaps trembling. It behoves us to try ourselves in these matters, for the Lord will, ere long, put us to the trial. This man's wealth was vexation of spirit to him, when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone also?

[105.] Ver 23-30. *The recompense of Christ's followers.*

Nothing more fully proves men's want of faith than their eagerness to be rich. Though Christ has spoken so strongly, few that have riches do not trust in them. How few that are poor are not tempted to envy! But experience confirms most fully the words of our Lord. Men's earnestness in this matter is like their toiling to build a high wall to shut themselves and their children out of heaven.

Christ took occasion from what had passed to show the difficulty of the salvation of rich people. He said this to his disciples to reconcile them to their condition, that the less they had of worldly wealth, the less hinderance they had in the way to heaven. It should be a satisfaction to those who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition; if they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if withal they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. Christ has reason to know what the way to heaven is, for he has laid it open; he tells us that this is one of the greatest difficulties.

He saith that it is a hard thing for a rich man to be a good christian, and to be saved. The way to heaven is to all a narrow way, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; but it is particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, which they can hardly do; and more sins easily beset them, which they can hardly avoid. Rich people have great temptations to resist; it is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world. Rich people have a great account to make up for their opportunities above others. It must be a great measure of Divine grace that will enable a man to break through these difficulties.

He saith that the conversion and salvation of a rich man is so extremely difficult, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. This is a proverbial expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the power of man. Nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. It is very rare for a man to be rich; and not to set his heart upon his riches; and it is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches to get to heaven; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 2. 15; James 4. 4. The way to heaven is very fitly compared to a needle's eye, which it is hard to hit, and hard to get through. A rich man is fitly compared to a camel, a beast of burden; for he has riches as a camel has his load. He carries it, but it is another's; he has it from others, spends it for others, and must shortly leave it to others; it is a burden, such men load themselves with thick clay, Hab. 2. 6.

This truth was very much wondered at by the disciples; their weakness was the cause of their wonder. It was not in contradiction to Christ, but for awakening to themselves, that they said, Who then can be saved? Considering the many difficulties in the way of salvation, it is really strange that any are saved. When we think how good God is, it may seem a wonder that so few are his; but when we think how bad man is, it is more a wonder that so many are saved, and Christ will be eternally admired in them. Who then can be saved? If riches are a hindrance to rich people, are not pride and sinful lusts found in those who are not rich, and as dangerous to them?

Though it be hard, yet it is not impossible for the rich to be saved; Jesus beheld them, looked wistfully upon his disciples, to shame them out of their fond conceit of the advantages rich people had. Nothing is too hard for God, Gen. 18. 14; Numb. 11. 23. When men are at a loss, God is not, for his power is infinite and irresistible; but this truth is here applied, 1. To the salvation of any. Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. The wisdom of man would soon be at a loss in contriving, and the power of man baffled in effecting the salvation of a soul. It is a creation, it is a resurrection, and with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. The beginning, pro-

gress, and perfection of the work of salvation, depend entirely upon the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. 2. To the salvation of rich people especially. It is impossible with men that such should be saved, but with God even this is possible: not that rich people should be saved *in* their worldliness, but that they should be saved *from* it. The sanctification and salvation of such as are surrounded with the temptations of this world is possible, by the all-sufficiency of Divine grace.

We have here the disciples' expectations from Christ, and his promises to them. When we hear what are the characters of those that shall be saved, it concerns us to inquire whether we, through grace, answer those characters.

Lord, saith Peter, we have forsaken all. Alas! it was but a poor all. Peter and the most of them had only left a few boats and nets, and the appurtenances of a poor fishing-trade; and yet observe how Peter here speaks of it, as if it had been some mighty thing; Behold, we have forsaken all. We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ, and to think we have made him much our debtor. However, Christ does not upbraid them with this. Though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all; it was the means of their obtaining a livelihood, and as dear to them as if it had been more. Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; for he accepts according to what a man hath.

Our Lord's promise to the apostles is, that those who had followed him in the regeneration, should at length be advanced and honoured in a peculiar manner. If we join the words, "in the regeneration" to the preceding clause, it may mean the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, disposing them to obey his call. But it may be joined with the following clause, and then it refers to the time when the apostles were to receive their full recompense, even when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, Matt. 25. 31. Then he will make all things new, and they will sit with him in judgment; the world and the church will be judged according to their doctrine, and they will appear distinguished from their brethren in Christ.

It is a metaphorical phrase setting forth the honour, dignity, and authority

## CHAPTER XX

of their office and ministry, by which they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel doctrinally and practically, by charging them with the sin of crucifying Christ, condemning them for their unbelief and rejection of him, denouncing the judgments that should fall on them as a nation for their sin, and by turning from them to the Gentiles, under which judgment they continue to this day.—(27.)

(Or, In the day of the great restoration of all things, when the elect shall enter on a new life of unspeakable glory, even in that great and dreadful day, when the Son of man shall sit on his throne of majesty to judge the quick and the dead, then shall the apostles, who once were despicable and mean, have the honour to sit upon thrones, to second and assist that awful act of final judgment on the rebellious tribes of Israel.—(34.)

Our Lord added, that every one who had forsaken possessions or comforts, for his sake and the gospel, would be abundantly recompensed at last. It is only like sowing seed, with the assurance of reaping a hundred fold in this world, and eternal life in that which is to come. May God give us faith to lay hold of, and to rest our hope on this his promise; then we shall be prepared for every service or sacrifice.

Our Saviour, in the last verse, obviates a mistake of some, as if pre-eminence in glory went by precedence in time, rather than by the measure and degree of grace. No; many that are first, shall be last, and the last, first. God will reveal that to babes, which he hides from the wise and prudent; will reject unbelieving Jews, and receive believing Gentiles. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly inheritances commonly are, by seniority of age, and priority of birth, but according to God's pleasure. This is the subject of a parable in the next chapter. Let us not trust in promising appearances or outward profession; nor despair of such as seem to have fallen, seeing that the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15, may for aught we know become eminent in faith and holiness.

28. Some take "in the regeneration" with the preceding words, others with the following words. Many refer it to the new work, to commence with the resurrection and the day of judgment, when all things should, as it were, be born again. Others again interpret it, "in the regeneration, renovation, or new state of things which the gospel dispensation is to introduce."—See *Bloomfield*. The term regeneration is usually applied to the conversion of individuals; but its relation here is to the general state of things.—*Campbell*. See Acts 3. 21.

Ver. 17-19. M. 10. 32-34. L. 18. 31-34.  
Ver. 20-28. M. 10. 35-45.  
Ver. 29-34. M. 10. 46-52. L. 18. 35-43.

§ 105. Ver 1-16. *The parable of the labourers in the vineyard.*

Nothing was more necessary in the gospel-dispensation than the inclusion of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles; nor was any thing more provoking to the Jews than the intimations of it. The principal scope of this parable seems to be, to show that the Jews should be first called into the vineyard, and many of them should come at the call; but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be fellow-citizens with the saints, which the Jews, even those that believed, would be displeased at, but without reason.

The parable may also be applied more generally, and shows us, 1. That God is debtor to no man. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at greater attainments in knowledge, grace, and usefulness, than others whose entrance was more early, and who promised fairer. 3. That the recompense of reward will be given to the saints, not according to the time of their conversion, but according to the preparations for it by grace in this world. Sufferers for Christ in the latter days, shall have the same reward with the martyrs and confessors of the primitive times; and faithful ministers now, the same with the first fathers. It is a description of the state of the visible church, and an illustration of the declaration that the last shall be first, and the first last, in its various references.

God is the great householder, whose we are, and whom we serve. As a householder, he has work that he will have to be done, and servants that he will have to be doing; he hires labourers, not because he needs them or their services, but in kindness to them.

The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was created to work; and is a servant to iniquity, or a servant to righteousness, Rom. 6. 19. Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called a state of idleness. The gospel call is given to those that stand

idle in the market-place. The market-place is the world, and from that we are called to retire. Come, come from this market-place. •

The church is God's vineyard; it is of his planting, watering, and fencing; and the fruits of it must be to his honour and praise. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God's, and to be kept and dressed for him. In this work we must not be slothful, not idlers, but labourers, working, and working out our own salvation. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell, but he that will go to heaven, must be diligent.

The householder promises a penny. The Roman penny was, in our money, sevenpence halfpenny, wages then sufficient for the day's maintenance. This does not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of works, or of debt, (no, it is of grace, free grace, Rom. 4. 4,) or that there is any proportion between our services and heaven's glories; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but it is to signify that there is a reward set before us, and a sufficient one. Whatsoever is right would be given, no one ever lost by working for God.

They are hired. The time of life is the day, in which we must work the works of Him that sent us into the world. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for a day; man is said to accomplish, as a hireling, his day. Job 14. 6. This should quicken us in our work, that we have but a little time to work in; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work; it is but for a day.

Notice is taken of the several hours of the day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles and their successors were sent forth at various hours of the gospel day. But this may be applied to the several ages of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promiscuous, to come and work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is effectual when we come at the call. They are particularly favoured who are called early in life to partake of salvation, and yield themselves to God's service; they may deem themselves happy in being kept from doing evil. However, we may, even to the eleventh hour, remonstrate with those who stand all

the day idle. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for yet there is room. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but "while there is life, there is hope." Nothing is too hard for almighty grace.

Let none, upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were sent into the vineyard, it is true, at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour; the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third, or sixth hour, and have refused them, will not have to say at the eleventh hour what these had. No man has hired us. Therefore, not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time; if we will hear His voice, it must be to-day.

When the evening was come, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. The particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the judgment. Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, the state of retribution commences.

The giving of a whole day's wages to those who had not done the tenth part of a day's work, shows that God distributes his rewards by grace and sovereignty, and not of debt. The last of the labourers may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because we are under grace, and not under the law, even such defective services shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded.

Some murmured at the good man of the house. This signifies the jealousy of the Jews at the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. The riches of Divine grace excite loud murmurs among proud pharisees and nominal christians. Their deeds are leavened with self-preference and boasting. They would claim exclusive right to the promise, but first or last their mouths will be stopped, and it will appear that many who were first in profession, in their hearts were at enmity with God, while the late convert will be shown to have loved much, and to have been humble and diligent. Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews, who have long been labouring

under the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom.

There is a great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and others too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. But the complainant had no reason at all to say he had any wrong done to him. If God gives that grace to others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us. Though God is a debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a debtor by his own promise. It is good for us often to consider what it was that we agreed with God for. Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; they choose their portion in this life, Ps. 17. 14. Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it; and wilt thou seek for happiness in the creature?

God is the owner of all good; his property in it is absolute and unlimited. He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and all will appear at length to have been done most wisely, and for holy ends. He punishes none above their deserts, and recompenses, one way or another, every service done for him; he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. He will fulfil his largest promises to every believer, in whatever period of the church, or time of life, he becomes a labourer in the vineyard.

See here the nature of envy. The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. It is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he doeth.

The application of the parable is given in ver. 16; So the first shall be last, and the last first. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world, which as yet stood idle in the marketplace, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful christians, than were found

among the Jews. And what labourers may be sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

They had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for many are called, but few chosen. It was so then, it is so still, that many are called with a common call, who are not chosen with a saving choice. As to the outward call, many are called, and yet refuse, Prov. 1. 24; nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him, Hos. 11. 2, 7, by which it appears that they were not chosen, for the election will obtain, Rom. 11. 7. There are but few chosen christians, in comparison with the many that are only called christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an outward call: we should fear lest we be found but seeming christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished christians, and so should seem to come short, Heb. 4. 1.

The same church privileges are common to all believers, Jews or Gentiles, sooner or later called; and equal title is given to the same eternal life and happiness. They are all loved with the same everlasting love, interested in the same covenant, in all the promises and blessings of it; they are bought with the same price of a Redeemer's blood, are justified by the same righteousness, equally heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Now indeed they have not the same measures of grace, but in heaven it will be all alike; even now they have the same for nature and kind, though not in the same exercise. (27.)

And let us remember that we are condemned criminals; that our wise and righteous Sovereign dispenses his unmerited favours as he sees good. Let us forego every proud claim, and apply for salvation as a free gift. Let us remember that it is a favour and an honour to be employed in his service. Let us never envy or grudge, but always rejoice and praise God for every display of his mercy to our fellow-sinners.

1. The last verse of the preceding chapter introduces this parable, and should not be separated from it. *Waterland* observes, "that it is meant to represent God's dealings with mankind, in respect to their outward call to the means of grace, as well as to their retribution in a state of



glory. In this simile, as in many others, some things do not correspond, namely, those which only respect the ornament, and do not affect the scope of the parable; as the labourers waiting to be hired, the murmurings, &c. The main point of similarity is the rejection of those that were first, and the admission of those who seemed last. We are not to endeavour to draw doctrinal inferences from every circumstance in a parable.

16. This is an allusion to the method, then usual, of selecting troops. The mass of the people being convened, for nearly all were liable to be called upon, choice was then made of those who were the most fit for service.—T. H. Horne.

§ 106. Ver. 17-19. *Jesus again foretells his sufferings.*

This is the third time Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings. He was now going to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself, the great Passover; both must be alone at Jerusalem, there the passover must be kept, Deut. 12. 5, and there a prophet must perish, because there the great sanhedrim sat, who were judges in such cases, Luke 13. 33.

The prediction itself is a repetition of what Christ had said before. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering-work; it filled him with desire and expectation; he spake thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. It is good for us also to be often thinking and speaking of our death, and of the sufferings it is likely we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; for by making them more familiar, they become less formidable.

He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than before. He foretells by whom he should suffer, but here adds, They shall deliver him to the Gentiles, that he might be the better understood; for crucifying was not a manner of death among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles: he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had part in his death, he was to reconcile both by his cross, Eph. 2. 16.

Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings, to encourage his disciples, and comfort them; and to direct us, under all the sufferings of this present time, to keep up a believing prospect of the glory to be revealed; to look at the things that are not seen, that are eternal, which will enable us

to call present afflictions light and momentary.

A believing view of our once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, is the best antidote to a proud, self-justifying disposition. When we consider the need there was of the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God, in order to the salvation of perishing sinners, when we recollect the willingness, constancy, and patience with which the Redeemer endured the insults and cruelty of men, and the wrath of God for us, surely we must feel our self-sufficiency abate, and be sensible of the freeness and riches of Divine grace in our salvation. Yet with what strange indifference do even disciples often read, hear, or speak of these subjects.

§ 107. Ver. 20-28. *The ambition of James and John.*

Here is the ambitious address which James and John made to Christ. It was great faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but great ignorance, that they still expected a temporal kingdom with worldly pomp and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. They ask not for employment in his kingdom, but for honour only; and the highest place next to Christ, above everybody else. It is probable that the last word in Christ's foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request. They concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused. Some cannot have comforts but they turn them to a wrong purpose. It was their mother's weakness to become the tool of ambition, which she should have checked.

It is a strange title that is here given her. She might be a good wife, a good woman, a good neighbour, but all cannot ennoble her so much as to be the mother of Zebedee's children.—(34.)

Pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is holy ambition to strive to excel others in grace and holiness; but it is sinful ambition to covet to exceed others in pomp and grandeur.

Let us use the words of a holy man. For me, O God, my ambition shall go so high as to be a saint in heaven, and to live as holily on earth as the best, but for precedence in heavenly honour, I do not, I dare not affect it. It is enough for me

if I may lift up my head among the heels of thy blessed ones.—(34.)

Christ answered not the mother, but the sons that set her on. Ye know not what ye ask. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand and on his left. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fancies. They imagined their warfare was accomplished, when it was scarcely begun. We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it. To repress the vanity and ambition of their request, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings.

Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? You talk of what great things you must have when you have done your work; but are you able to hold out to the end of it? Put the matter seriously to yourselves. It is a bitter cup that is to be drunk of, wormwood and gall, a cup of trembling indeed, but not the portion of the cup of the wicked men, Ps. 11. 6. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it; it is a cup in the hand of a Father, John 18. 11. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Ezek. 20. 37; Isa. 48. 10. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Phil. 1. 29. The truth is, religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

See how boldly they engage for themselves. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism. Those are commonly most confident, who are least acquainted with the cross.

See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold; Ye shall drink of my cup. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should suffer for him. He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they

should have a place in his kingdom. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompense for the greatest sufferings on earth. The degrees of glory are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God. Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his own purchase, goes exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose. Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but he says, it is to as many as were given him, John 17. 2. It is not mine to give, that matter is already settled and concerted. It is not mine to give to those who seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it.

Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it. Jesus showed the difference between his kingdom and that of the nations. Lordly authority and domineering might indeed be consistent for the tyrants of the Gentiles, but was unsuitable to the rulers of God's people and the spiritual pastors of his flock. Humility, self-abasement, and diligence would render persons chief among them. (Of this Christ had set them an example; he appeared among them as the Son of man, not to assume outward authority, but to be the servant of all in what was for their good. He was indeed ministered to as a poor man, which was part of his humiliation; but he never was ministered to as a great man. He came to minister help to all in distress; he made himself a servant to the sick and diseased; he attended continually to this, and denied himself both food and rest to attend to it. And, after spending his days in this manner, he was about to lay down his life as a ransom for the souls of multitudes, even of all that should ever believe in his name; suffering once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. That man who labours the most diligently, and suffers with the most patience, seeking to do good to his brethren, and to promote the salvation of souls, most resembles Christ, and will be most honoured by him to all eternity.)

Our Lord speaks of his death in the same terms that had been applied to the sacrifices of old. The force of the expressions, as conveying the idea of substitution for others, is fully established, when applied in the New Testament to the death of Christ, which is expressly

said to be a sacrifice for the sins of men, and is that true and substantial sacrifice which those of the law but faintly and imperfectly represented.—(94.)

The aspiring princes of the Gentiles made the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and often a sacrifice to their own humour. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he gives his honour and life also a ransom for his subjects. Our lives were forfeited to Divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued us; he was made sin and a curse for us, and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, Acts 20. 28; 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, Why not for me?

23. "Is not mine to give, except to those for whom," &c. *Scholefield and others.*

§ 108. Ver. 29—34. *Jesus gives sight to two blind men near Jericho.*

Two blind men united in their request. It is good for those who are labouring under the same calamity, or, infirmity of body or mind, to join together in prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all petitioners.

They heard that Jesus passed by. Though they were blind, they were not deaf. The defect of one sense may be, and often is, made up in another. When they heard that Jesus passed by, they asked no further questions, but immediately cried out. It is good to improve the present opportunity; if once let slip, it may never return; these blind men did so, and did wisely, for we do not find that Christ ever visited Jericho again. Now is the accepted time.

The address itself is observable.

1. Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest. Cold desires beg denials. When discountenanced, they cried the more. This is wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

2. Of humility in prayer; not specifying the favour, or prescribing what, much less pleading merit, but casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to the Mediator's mercy, in what way he pleases.

3. Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to Christ, they confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Christ Lord, 1 Cor. 12. 3. They take encouragement in prayer from his power; as in calling him the Son of David, they take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah; of whom had been foretold particularly his compassion to the poor and needy, Ps. 72. 12, 13.

4. Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding discouragement. The multitude rebuked them, as clamorous and impertinent, and bid them not disturb the Master. In following Christ with our prayers, we must expect to meet with hinderances and manifold discouragements. Such rebukes are permitted that faith and fervency, patience and perseverance may be tried. These poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that followed Christ. The sincere and serious beggars at Christ's door, commonly meet with the worst rebukes from those that follow him in pretence and hypocrisy. But when they were in pursuit of such mercy, it was no time for timidity or hesitation; they cried the more earnestly.

Christ encouraged them. It were sad for us, if the Master were not more kind and tender than the multitude; but he will not suffer humble supplicants to be silenced. He called them. Christ not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us. He inquired further into their case; What will ye that I shall do unto you? Christ knew well enough; but he would know it from them, whether they begged for an alms, as from a common person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. It is the will of God that we should in every thing make our requests known to him by prayer and supplication. In prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.

They soon made known their request, such a one as they never made to any one else; Lord, that our eyes may be opened. The wants and burdens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate. O that we were but as apprehensive of our spiritual maladies, and could as feelingly complain of them, especially our spiritual blindness! Lord, that the eyes of our mind may be opened! Many are spiritually blind, and yet say they see. Were we but sensible of our

darkness, we should soon apply ourselves to him, who alone has the power, with this prayer, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

Christ cured them; when he encouraged them to seek him, he did not say, Seek in vain. The poor and blind are wretched and miserable, and objects of compassion. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness, Luke 1. 78, 79. He that formed the eye, can he not heal it? Yes, he can, he did, he did it easily, he touched their eyes; he did it effectually. Thus he not only proved that he was sent of God, but showed on what errand he was sent—to give sight to those that are spiritually blind, to turn them from darkness to light.

These blind men, when they had received sight, followed him. None follow Christ blindly. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. They followed Christ, as his disciples, to learn of him, and as his witnesses, to bear their testimony to him and to his power and goodness. The best evidence of spiritual enlightening is constant adherence to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Leader, showing forth his praises who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

From this miracle our eyes should be turned to Jesus as our Saviour, convinced of his power, and believing in him as still present, with all his grace and love, to do for us whatever we ask of him. Let him hear us saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us, and we may be as sure that he will have compassion on us, as if we saw him with our eyes, and heard him speak the word for our recovery. These miracles are our call to Jesus; may we hear it, and make it our daily prayer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—(71.)

## CHAPTER XXI.

V. 1—11. M. 11. 1—11. L. 19. 29—40. J. 12. 12—19.  
V. 12, 13. M. 11. 15—17. L. 19. 45, 46.  
V. 17—19. M. 11. 12—14.  
V. 20—22. M. 11. 20—26.  
V. 23—27. M. 11. 27—33. L. 20. 1—8.  
V. 23—46. M. 12. 1—12. L. 20. 9—19.

§ 111. Ver. 1—11. *Christ enters Jerusalem.*

Our Lord Jesus travelled much, and his custom was to travel on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem; many a weary step he had when he went about doing good. How ill does it become Christians to be solicitous about their own ease and state,

when their Master had so little of either! Yet once in his life he rode in triumph; it was when he went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure, and preferment he courted!

The provision made for this solemnity was such as showed his kingdom was not of this world. They were come to Bethphage, which was the suburbs of Jerusalem, and was accounted as Jerusalem, a long scattered street that lay toward the mount of Olives; when he entered upon that, he sent two of his disciples to fetch an ass and her colt. Asses were much used in that country for travelling; horses were kept only by great men, and for war. Some think that this had reference to a custom in Israel, Judg. 5. 10; 12. 14. And Christ would thus enter, not as a Conqueror, but as the Judge of Israel. It was not his own, but borrowed. For our sakes he became in all respects poor; he had nothing of this world's goods but what was given him or lent him.

The disciples who were sent to borrow this ass are directed to say, The Lord has need of him. Those that are in need, must not be ashamed to own their need; none ought to impose upon kindness when they have not need.

We have here an instance of Christ's knowledge. His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed. Doth God take care for oxen? 1 Cor. 9. 9. No doubt he doth. We have an instance of his power over the spirits of men. The hearts of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are in the hand of the Lord. What Christ sets us to do, he will bear us out in doing, and furnish us with answers to the objections we may be assaulted with, and make them prevalent; as here, Straightway he will send them. We have an example of justice, in his not using the ass without the owner's consent.

He looked back upon the prophets that all things which were written of the Messiah, might be punctually accomplished in him. This particularly which was written of him, Zech. 9. 9, where it begins a large prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah. He came to his church, even in this lower world, to rule; he is Head over all things to the church. Notice was given of the coming of her King. Christ will have his coming looked for, and waited for.

See how his coming is described. Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty. He comes not in wrath to take vengeance, but in mercy to work salvation. He is meek to suffer the greatest injuries and indignities for Zion's cause, meek to bear with the follies and unkindnesses of Zion's own children.

The procession was answerable to the preparation, being destitute of worldly pomp, yet accompanied with a spiritual power. As meekness and outward poverty were characteristics of Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how inconsistent avarice, ambition, and the pride of life must be with the character of Zion's citizens! They brought the ass and the colt. The trappings were, like all the rest, such as came to hand. We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ. There was nothing in his retinue stately or magnificent; they were only the common people. The chief priests and the elders afterward herded with the multitude that abused him upon the cross; but we find none of them here joining with the multitude that did him honour. Christ is honoured by the multitude, more than by the magnificence of his followers; he values men by their souls, not by names or titles, 1 Cor. 1. 26.

This great multitude studied to do honour to Christ. They spread their garments in the way, that he might ride upon them. Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet. Others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, in token of liberty, victory, and joy. Those that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, ver. 9. When they carried branches about at the feast of tabernacles, they were wont to cry, Hosanna. Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee; referring to Ps. 118. 25, 26, where the Messiah is prophesied of as the Head-stone of the corner, though the builders refused him; and his subjects are described as attending him with good wishes to his enterprises.

Hosanna also speaks the same with, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Let his coming in the name of the Lord be mentioned to our comfort, and to his glory. Well may we say, Blessed is he; for it is in him that we are

blessed. Well may we follow him with our blessings, who meets us with his. Their wishing well to his kingdom was intimated in their Hosanna. If they understood it of a temporal kingdom, it was their mistake, which a little time would rectify. But of how little value is popular applause! The unstable multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Even the popularity which sometimes attends the preaching of the gospel is little to be depended on. Multitudes often seem to approve, but there are few who become consistent disciples.

When Jesus was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the pharisaical class, were moved with envy and indignation. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom! The citizens said, Who is this? They were, it seems, ignorant concerning Christ. Though he was the glory of his people Israel, yet Israel knew him not.

The attending disciples need be at no loss for an answer. Which of the prophets has not put it into their mouths? Who is this? Ask Moses, and he shall tell you, the Seed of the woman, who shall bruise the serpent's head. Ask your father Jacob, and he shall tell you, the Shiloh, of the tribe of Judah. Ask David, and he shall tell you, the King of glory. Ask Isaiah, and he shall tell you, Immanuel, Wonderful, the mighty God, the Prince of peace. Ask Jeremiah, and he shall tell you, the righteous Branch. Ask Daniel, and he shall tell you, the Messiah. Ask John the Baptist, he shall tell you, the Lamb of God. The God of the prophets hath told you, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Yea, the very devils themselves have been forced to confess, I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. On no side hath Christ left himself without a full and plain testimony.—(34.)

5. Instead of an ass and a colt, the word translated "and" may be rendered "namely," or "even," as in some other passages. The term colt describes an animal not yet employed for any common purposes, as Mark and Luke add, On which no man had ever sat. The word "them," ver. 7, may be referred to the clothes. See the authorities in *Carpenter*. Or, we may consider that Mark and Luke do not mention the ass, but only the colt, as our Lord rode only upon the latter.

§ 111, 112. Ver. 12-17. *Christ expels the profaners of the temple.*

Christ found some of the precincts of the temple turned into a market for cattle, and such things as were used for sacrifices, and partly occupied by the money-changers. We may suppose they took advantage of strangers who came from distant places to worship, and thus joined iniquity to profanation, while the priests doubtless shared the gain. Our Lord therefore drove the whole company from the place, as he had done at the entrance to his ministry, John 2. 13-17. A Divine energy attended his words and works, which prevented opposition. At the same time the blind and lame persons, who frequented the temple to ask alms, came around him, and he healed them; thus he showed the nature of his authority. Christ's healing was a real answer to that question, Who is this? His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling of the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former. The chief priests, instead of being convinced, were displeased, especially when they heard the children crying Hosanna, as the multitudes had done before. In reply, he intimated, that, as the Son of God, he had caused honour to be rendered to him by these children. Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and swear, or to pray and praise. The Jews betimes taught their children to carry branches at the feast of tabernacles, and to cry Hosanna; but God taught them to apply it to Christ. Christ is so far from being ashamed of the services of little children, that he takes particular notice of them, and is well pleased with them. If God may be honoured by babes and sucklings, much more by children grown up to some capacity. This is encouragement for children to be good betimes, and to parents to teach them to be so. The labour neither of the one nor of the other shall be in vain. Praise is perfected out of the mouths of such.

If Christ came now into many parts of his visible church, how many recesses of avarice and iniquity he would discover and cleanse! And how many things daily practised under the guise of religion, would he show to be more suitable to a den of thieves than to a house of prayer! It will at length appear that such abuses have been one great cause of the spread

of infidelity, have hindered the progress of the gospel, hardened the hearts and murdered the souls of many.

12. The money-changers supplied the Jews, who came from distant parts, with money, to be received back at their homes, or which they had paid before they began their journey. They also exchanged foreign coins for those which were current at Jerusalem, or larger, for the value in small ones, to pay the temple dues. From Mark it appears that Jesus did not drive out the money-changers on the day of his entry into Jerusalem. We may either consider that Matthew does not expressly connect this with the events of that day, see Bloomfield, or, with Doddridge and others, may suppose that they were driven out on two successive days.

§ 112, 113. Ver. 18-22. *The barren fig-tree cursed.*

Christ returned in the morning to Jerusalem. As he went, he hungered. He was a Man, and submitted to the infirmities of our nature. All Christ's miracles hitherto proved the power of his grace and blessing; but now, at last, to show that all judgment is committed to him, he would give a specimen of the power of his wrath and curse.

This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general; and so it teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion from those that make profession of it; the savour of it from those that have the show of it. His just expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. The sin of barrenness is justly punished with the curse and plague of barrenness. Thus the sin of hypocrites is made their punishment; they would not do good, and therefore they shall do none; he that is fruitless, let him be fruitless still, and lose his honour and comfort. A false and hypocritical profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse. The fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. Hypocrites may look plausible for a time, but, having no principle, their profession will soon come to nothing; and the falseness and folly of the pretender is manifest to all.

It represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus came among them, looking to find something that would be pleasing to him, fruit that might abound to a good account. His expectations were frustrated; he found nothing but leaves; they called Abraham their father, but did not do the works of Abraham; they pro-

posed themselves expectants of the promised Messiah, but, when he came, they did not receive and entertain him. He passed doom upon them, that never any fruit should grow upon them, or be gathered from them, as a church or as a people, from henceforward for ever. Except the particular persons among them that believed, they became worse and worse; after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up; their beauty defaced, their privileges and ornaments, their temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and festivals, all the glories of their church and state, fell like leaves in autumn. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us peculiarly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree. How tremendous the sentence of being left to enmity against God!

When Jesus saw the surprise of the disciples at this, he again showed them the energy or power of faith, with especial reference to the miracles they were to work in his name. On proper occasions, whatever they undertook, relying on his power, they should be enabled to perform. Nothing they undertook should be impossible to them. We are not called to work miracles, but whatever we attempt in faith, in the path of duty, and for the honour of Christ, we may confidently expect to be assisted in it. To this our Lord added, that they ought verily to believe that they should receive whatever they asked in prayer. We should indeed often question whether we ask proper petitions, or in a right manner; but as far as our prayers are sincere and spiritual, and grounded on God's express promise, we ought not, on account of our unworthiness, or for any difficulty, to doubt his power or willingness to grant what we ask, provided it is right. Having offered our petitions, we should go on with our work, as if we had already received the wisdom, strength, or help for which we asked, assured they will be sent when necessary.

§ 114. Ver. 23—27. *Jesus's discourse with the chief priests and others in the temple.*

As our Lord now openly appeared as the Messiah, the chief priests and scribes were much offended, especially because he had exposed and removed the abuses they sanctioned. They deemed themselves the sources of ecclesiastical authority, and demanded by what authority he did these things. They overlooked the Divine

power of his miracles, which sanctioned all his other actions. The answer of our Lord is a beautiful model of the meekness of wisdom. He did not harshly or ostentatiously assert his Divine prerogative, or appeal to his miracles, but left them to condemn themselves. He inquired what they thought of John's ministry and baptism. As most of them had neglected John, this question put them in a difficulty. Two things they considered and consulted in this reasoning with themselves—their credit, and their safety; the same things all aim at, who seek their own advantage. They perceived, that if they allowed John to have acted by Divine authority, they could not answer why they had not believed him, and regarded his exhortations to repentance, his testimony to Christ as the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Son of God. On the other hand, if they treated John's baptism as a mere human device, they feared the people, who generally looked upon him as an eminent servant of God. They therefore gave no opinion. And observe, they told an untruth, for they knew that John's baptism was of God. There are many who are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak that which they know to be false concerning their own thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, or their remembering or forgetting. Our Lord then refused to answer their inquiry, as John's testimony, his own character and miracles, with the declarations of the prophets, gave all needful information. It is best to shun needless altercations with malicious opposers.

§ 114. Ver. 28—32. *The parable of the two sons.*

Reproving parables are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge them out of their own mouths. The scope of the parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, is to show that they who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were shamed even by the publicans and harlots, who knew it, and owned it.

The father of these two sons represents the Lord, as the Creator and Benefactor of all men, and as the especial friend of the Jewish nation, to whose obedience he had the fullest right. The first of them represented the openly wicked of the Jews, who were at length brought to repentance, and became Christ's disciples. The second represented the priests, scribes, and pharisees, who had a form of godliness, but

proved the greatest enemies to the gospel. They could not but acknowledge that the latter, though at first faulty, was the most obedient and diligent. Jesus then applied it to those whom they despised and despaired of, but who would actually enter into his kingdom as true believers and obedient disciples before them. This was evident from the success of John's ministry, in the reformation of many such persons.

The publicans and harlots were like the first son in the parable, from whom little of religion was expected; and yet many of them were wrought upon by the ministry of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elias. These fitly represented the Gentile world; for, as Whitby observes, the Jews generally ranked the publicans with the heathen.

• The whole human race are like children whom the Lord hath brought up, but they have rebelled against him, only some are more plausible in their disobedience than others. But it often happens that the daring rebel is brought to repentance, and becomes the Lord's servant; while the formalist grows hardened in pride and enmity to the gospel. It exceedingly aggravates the guilt of such, when the evident reformation of others only renders them more outrageous in their scorn and opposition. It is therefore peculiarly the duty of those who come in the way of righteousness, to show, as well as to explain the holy tendency of their doctrine.

Observe, when the first son repented, he went; that was the fruit meet for repentance. The only evidence of our repentance for former resistance, is immediately to comply, and set to work; and then all shall be well. Blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

31. Those who had been publicans and harlots, not such as continued so.—*T. H. Horne.*

§ 114. Ver. 33—46. *The parable of the wicked husbandmen.*

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa. 61. 3. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted, Ps. 80. 15, planted with the choicest vine, Isa. 5. 2, a noble vine, Jer. 2. 21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briers, but vines must be planted. God's church

in the world is taken under his special protection. It is hedged round about. The owner digged a wine-press, and built a tower. God instituted ordinances in his church, for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way prosperous?

He intrusted these visible church-privileges to the nation and people of the Jews; and from those that enjoy church-privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. He waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. The servants were the prophets of the old testament, who were sent to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. The requirement was not hard; it was only to receive some fruit of that which he himself planted, the observance of laws and statutes he gave.

When he sent them his servants, they abused them, though they represented the Master himself, and spake in his name. See here what has always been the lot of God's faithful messengers, more or less. They beat them, and killed them.

God persevered in his goodness to the Jews. He sent them John the Baptist, and him they had beheaded; and yet he sent them his disciples, to prepare his way. O the riches of the patience and forbearance of God, in keeping up in his church a persecuted ministry! They persisted in their wickedness. At length, he sent them his Son. Never did grace appear more displayed. All the prophets were forerunners to Christ. It might be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be revered. But they thought, if they could but get rid of this Jesus, they might impose what traditions, and force the people to what submissions they pleased. Thus they take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed. They cast him out of the vineyard, out of the holy city, for he was crucified without the gate, Heb. 13. 12. As if He had been the shame and reproach, who was the greatest glory of his people Israel. Thus they who persecuted the servants, persecuted the Son. As men treat God's ministers, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them. How can we, if faithful to his cause, expect a favourable reception from a wicked world, or from ungodly professors of christianity, when the holy prophets, and the Son of God himself, were thus rejected and treated with cruelty. And let us ask ourselves



whether we that have the vineyard and all its advantages, render fruits as a people, as a family, or as individuals, in due season?

Their doom is read out of their own mouths. God's proceedings are so unexceptionable, that there needs but an appeal to sinners themselves concerning them. They readily answered, He will miserably destroy those wicked men.

Our Saviour, in his question, concludes that the lord of the vineyard will come, and reckon with them. The Lord of the vineyard will come. When he comes, what will he do to carnal professors? What will he do to cruel persecutors? He will miserably destroy those wicked men. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in their destruction by the Romans, which was completed about forty years after this. It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness.

He will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. God will have a church in the world. Persecutors may destroy ministers, but cannot destroy the church.

Observe the further illustration and application of this by Christ himself, telling them, in effect, that they had rightly judged. That scripture, The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the head of the corner, illustrates the preceding parable, especially that part of it which refers to Christ. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, and they would not allow Christ a place in their building, would not admit his doctrine or laws; they threw him aside as a despised stone. The advancing of this stone to be the head of the corner, is the same with letting out the vineyard to other husbandmen. He who was rejected by the Jews, was embraced by the Gentiles. Christ is all and in all. His authority over the gospel church, and influence upon it, his ruling it as the Head, and uniting it as the Corner-stone, are the great tokens of his exaltation.

The hand of God was in all this. He permitted and overruled it. Christ applies the sentence which they had passed, and turns it upon themselves. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you. To the Jews had long pertained the adoption and the glory, Rom. 9. 4; to them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. 3. 2, and the sacred trust of revealed religion, but now it shall be so no longer. They were not only unfruitful in the use of their privileges, but, under pretence of

them, opposed the gospel of Christ, and so forfeited them.

The Gentiles shall be taken in. This is the mystery which blessed Paul was so much affected with, Rom. 11. 30, 33, and which the Jews were so much displeased at, Acts 22. 21, 22. It shall go to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Christ knows who will bring forth gospel fruits in the use of gospel means; our fruitfulness is all the work of his own hands, and known unto God are all his works. They shall bring forth the fruits better than the Jews had done.

Jesus applies the scripture which he had quoted, to their terror, ver. 44. We have here the doom of two sorts of people, for whose fall it proves that Christ is set. Some, through ignorance, stumble at Christ in his estate of humiliation. The offence they take at Christ will hurt themselves; they will fall, and be broken, and snared, Isa. 8. 14, 15; 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin. Others, through malice, oppose Christ in his estate of exaltation, and on them it shall fall, for they pull it on their own heads. Some make this an allusion to the manner of stoning to death among the Jews. The malefactors were first thrown down violently from a high place, upon a great stone, which would much bruise them; then they threw other stones upon them, which would crush them to pieces.

The chief priests and elders that heard the parables, perceived that Jesus spake of them, and that in what they said they had but read their own doom. A guilty conscience needs no accuser. They sought to lay hands on him. When those who hear the reproofs of the word, are not pricked to the heart with conviction and contrition, they will be cut to the heart with rage and indignation, Acts 2. 37; 5. 33. They durst not do it for fear of the multitude, who took Jesus for a prophet, though not for the Messiah. The fear of the people restrained them from speaking ill of John, and here from doing ill to Christ. God has many ways of restraining the remainders of wrath, as he has of making that which breaks out to redound to his praise, Ps. 76. 10.

May we be found attending to the voice of those whom the Lord sends to reprove and exhort us; may we reverence and be obedient to the Son of God. May he become more and more precious to our souls, as the firm Foundation and Corner-stone

of his church. May we be willing to be despised and hated for his sake; may we be faithful even unto death, and when he comes to destroy his enemies, we shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

33. Towers are commonly built in the eastern vineyards that watchmen may look out, and guard against depredators. The wine-press, or rather the cistern under the press, was a cavity in the earth, plastered round the inside, to hold the expressed liquor.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 15-46. M. 12. 13-37. L. 20. 20-44.

§ 114. Ver. 1-14. *The parable of the marriage feast.*

This parable of the marriage feast shows the motive of Christ's humiliation, with its effects upon his people, and on the abusers of his gospel. The abundant and rich provision made for perishing souls in the gospel, is represented by a royal feast made by a king, with all the eastern magnificence and liberality, on the occasion of the marriage of his son. The king is God, a great King, King of kings. Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel day is the day of his espousals. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast, Isa. 25. 6, a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's good-will toward men. Our merciful God has not only provided food, but a royal feast, for the perishing souls of his rebellious creatures. There is enough and to spare, of every thing that can conduce to our present comfort and everlasting happiness, in the salvation of his Son Jesus Christ.

Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. The guests first invited were the Jews. The guests are called, bidden to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious proposals made, but gracious persuasives. We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead, 2 Cor. 5. 11, 20. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, but sends to them. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king sent forth other servants. When the prophets of the old

testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the kingdom of God was at hand, the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, and to persuade them to accept the offer. Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that hears say, Come; let him that is athirst, come, Rev. 22. 17. The Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready, peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as wells of living water for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; providences are ready to work for our good, and heaven, at last, is ready to receive us. Is all this ready, and shall we be unready? Is all this preparation made for us, and is there any room to doubt of our welcome? Come, therefore, O come, we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6. 1.

The treatment which the gospel of Christ often meets with among the children of men, is represented by the treatment that this message met with. It was basely slighted; they would not come. The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him, is, not because they cannot, but because they will not, John 5. 40. This will aggravate the misery of sinners, that it was their own act and deed to refuse happiness. But this was not all; they made light of it—they thought it not worth coming for. Making light of Christ, and of the great salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. They were careless. Multitudes perish eternally through mere carelessness, who show not direct aversion, but indifference to the care of their souls.

They made light of the marriage feast, because there were other things they had more mind to. The business and profit of worldly employments prove great hindrance to many in closing with Christ. It is true, that both farmers and merchants must be diligent, but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. Lawful things undo us when unlawfully managed. Whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

The messengers were basely abused, this, in the parable, seems unaccountable, few indeed would be so barbarous to servants that came to invite them to a feast;

but, in the application of the parable, it was matter of fact. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, directly or indirectly, agents in most of the early persecutions.

The utter ruin coming upon the Jewish church and nation, is here represented by the punishment which the king inflicted on these insolent recusants. The crying sin that brought the ruin was their being murderers. Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills up the measure of guilt of any people.

The King sent forth his armies. This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. Judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; it is set forth for example to all that oppose Christ and his gospel.

The replenishing of the church, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests out of the highways. The wedding is ready, the covenant of grace ready to be sealed, but they which were bidden, that is, the Jews, were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to. It is not owing to God that sinners perish, but to themselves. Thus, by the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles. Christ will have a kingdom in the world, though many reject the grace, and resist the power of that kingdom. The offer of Christ and salvation to the Gentiles was unexpected; such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men to be met with an invitation to a wedding-feast. The Jews, long before, expected the Messiah and his kingdom; but the Gentiles never had heard of it before, consequently, could not conceive it belonged to them. It was universal; "Ask those that go by the way, ask any body; tell all that they shall be welcome to gospel privileges upon gospel terms; whoever will, let him come, without exception."

See the success of this second invitation; if some will not come, others will. Christ's apostles, though Jews, preferred the service of Christ before their respect to their nation; and St. Paul, though sorrowing for the Jews, yet magnifies his office as the apostle of the Gentiles. The design of the gospel, is to gather souls together; not the nation of the Jews

only, but all the children of God scattered abroad, John 11: 52; 10: 16. To gather them to Christ, and to partake the privileges of the new covenant.

The guests were a multitude; all, as many as they found, both bad and good; some that, before conversion, were well-inclined, as the devout Greeks, Acts 17: 4, and Cornelius; others that had run to excesses, as the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6: 11. Some that proved bad, that turned not to the Lord with all their heart; others that were upright and sincere. Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, inclose both good and bad; but the Lord knows them that are his.

The case of hypocrites is represented by the guest that had not on a wedding-garment. Those come short of salvation by Christ, not only who refuse to take upon them the profession of religion, but who are not sound in that profession. This hypocrite was not discovered to be without a wedding-garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. It is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, but he cannot be. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King; then he will separate between the precious and the vile. It concerns all the guests to prepare for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God.

The King saw a man who had not on a wedding-garment; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from Divine justice. The righteousness of saints, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ made righteousness to them, is the clean linen, Rev. 19: 8. This man was not naked; some raiment he had, but not a wedding-garment. Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a christian temper of mind; and are adorned with christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding-garment. It is not material whether we understand the wedding-garment to mean the imputed righteousness of Christ, or the sanctification of the Spirit; both are alike necessary, and both go together. No man hath the wedding-garment by nature, or can form it for himself.

Friend! a seeming friend, a friend in profession, under manifold ties and obli-

gations to be a friend. There are many in the church who are false friends to Jesus Christ, who say that they love him, while their hearts are not with him. How camest thou in hither? The king does not chide the servants for letting him in; but checks his presumption. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges.

He was speechless; being condemned by his own conscience. Those who live within the church, and who died without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day; they will be without excuse. He is pinioned, as condemned malefactors were. In the day of judgment, hypocrites will be bound; angels shall bind up these tares in bundles for the fire, ch. 13. 41; they cannot resist or outrun their punishment.

Take him away. Those that walk unworthy of christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously claimed. He is ordered into a doleful dungeon. Our Saviour here passes out of the parable into that which it intimates—the damnation of hypocrites in the other world. Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness out of heaven, the land of light: or it is extreme darkness, darkness to the last degree, without the least ray or spark of light, or hope of it—like that of Egypt. Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness. This our Saviour often uses as part of the description of hell-torments, which are represented, not so much by the misery itself, as by the anguish sinners will have under it. There shall be weeping, an expression of great sorrow and anguish; not a gush of tears, which gives present ease, but constant weeping, which is constant torment; and the gnashing of teeth is an expression of the greatest rage and indignation. Let us therefore hear and fear.

The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying, Many are called, but few are chosen. Of the many called to the wedding-feast, all are set aside as unchosen who make light of it, and prefer other things before it; all the profane, and all the hypocritical; they are few, that are chosen. Many are called to the wedding-feast, but few are chosen to the wedding-garment, that is, to salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit. Then let us examine ourselves whether we are in

the faith, and seek to be approved by the King himself, when he comes to see the guests.

8. It was customary sometimes to send to remain or call to a feast those who were already invited.

11. Among the orientals, long white robes were worn at public festivals; and those who appeared on such occasions with any other garments, were esteemed not only highly culpable, but worthy of punishment, Zeph. 1. 7, 8. The person who invited the guests, prepared such a garment for each, for the time being.—*A. Clarke.*

§ 115. Ver. 15-22. *The pharisees question Jesus concerning the tribute.*

It was foretold concerning Christ, that the rulers would take counsel against him, Ps. 2. 2. The more there is of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is.

The pharisees sent their disciples, who would look less like tempters, and more like learners. With them they sent the herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for entire subjection to the Roman emperor, and to Herod as his deputy; who made it their business to reconcile people to that government. The pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews. Though opposed to each other, they joined against Christ.

They aimed to entangle him in his talk. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word. There were two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be rid of him; either by law or by force. But by law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; and the Roman powers were not apt to concern themselves about questions of words, and names, and their law. Acts 18. 14, 15. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people; but the people took Christ for a prophet.

What they said of Christ was right; and whether they knew it or not, blessed be God, we know it. 1. Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness—that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. 2. He was a bold reprover. He regarded not the person of man. He reprov'd with equity, Isa. 11. 4, never with partiality.

Yet there was nothing but flattery and

treachery in their intention, and it is the greatest folly to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, Rev. 2. 23. Those that mock God, do but deceive themselves, Gal. 6. 7.

Their question was, Whether it was lawful to pay the taxes, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation? The ground of the doubt was, that they were Abraham's seed, and should not by consent be in bondage to any man, John 8. 33. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of God's word, contended with his providence, when they should have accepted the punishment of their iniquity. By this question they hoped to entangle Christ. Had he merely directed them to pay the tribute, they would have represented him to the people as deciding against the law of Moses, and requiring unreserved obedience to idolaters, so that he could not be the Messiah. Had he declared it unlawful to pay tribute to Cesar, they would have delivered him to the Roman governor, as guilty of sedition.

Christ perceived their wickedness. A temptation perceived is half conquered. Whatever vizard the hypocrite puts on, our Lord Jesus sees through it. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. His convicting them of hypocrisy might have sufficed for an answer: but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and laid down a rule for his church in this matter; yet he avoided giving offence, and broke the snare they had laid for him.

He forced them to confess Cesar's authority over them. Show me the tribute-money. He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem he had not so much as one piece of money about him; for our sakes he became poor; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to overvalue it. The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time. They presently brought him the most common piece then in use: it was stamped with the emperor's image and superscription. Christ asked them, Whose image is this? They owned it to be Cesar's. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud, that he is the king of the country, whose coin is current in the country. From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cesar.

It is too late to dispute paying tribute to Cesar; your land is a province of his empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. Render to all their due. By this answer no offence was given. Christ did not interpose as a judge or a divider in matters of this nature, for his kingdom is not of this world. In this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, nor controversies relating to them. Ministers that would please their Master, must not entangle themselves in the affairs of this life: they forfeit the guidance of God's Spirit, and the convoy of his providence, when they go out of their way. Christ discusses not the emperor's title, but enjoins peaceable subjection to the powers that be. Yet his prosecutors, though he had expressly charged them to render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, accused him that he forbade to give tribute to Cesar, Luke 23. 2.

His adversaries were reproved. Some of them would have had him make it unlawful to give tribute to Cesar, that they might have a pretence to save their money. They all withheld from God his dues, and are reproved for that: while they were vainly contending about their civil liberties, they had lost the life and power of religion.

His disciples were instructed that the christian religion is no enemy to civil government. Christ's kingdom does not clash or interfere with the kingdoms of the earth, in any thing that pertains to their jurisdiction. By Christ kings reign, and it is the duty of subjects to render to magistrates that which, according to the laws of their country, is their due.

When we render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, we must remember to render to God the things that are God's. Out of our time and out of our estates He must have his share as well as Cesar if Cesar's commands interfere with God's. we must obey God rather than men.

They marvelled, and left him, and went their way. They admired his sagacity in discovering and avoiding a snare which they thought so craftily laid. Christ is, and will be the wonder, not only of his friends, but of his enemies. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it; his power, but will not submit to it. They went their way as persons ashamed;

there is nothing got by contending with Christ.

17. Had Jesus answered, Yes, the Jews would have condemned him by the law, Deut. 17. 14—20, especially the words, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother." Had he answered, No, they would have accused him to the Roman government.—*A. Clarke.* The tribute was a capitation tax of a denarius, (about eightpence,) paid in Roman coin, and by admitting the Roman money to be current among them, the Jews had, according to a maxim of their own, acknowledged the Roman authority. The inscription on some of the coin was, "Cesar Augustus, Judea being subdued."

§ 115. Ver. 23—33. *The question of the sadducees concerning the resurrection.*

The doctrines of Christ were offensive to the infidel sadducees, as well as to the pharisees and herodians. He carried the great truth of the resurrection and a future state much further than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. They thought to embarrass Jesus with a difficulty, which perhaps had perplexed some of their opponents, though the case was plain, and would not have been worth recording, but that it showed the cavilling spirit of infidelity, and enabled our Lord to give a most instructive answer. This method of insinuating against the truth from imaginary difficulties is a sort of logic of which infidels, both ancient and modern, have been very fond. It often succeeds in perplexing weak minds, and embarrassing superficial inquirers. Vain men, because they cannot comprehend the way of salvation, question the truth of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with God, all these difficulties vanish. This, therefore, we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised. Our Lord at once declared that they erred, because they understood not the scriptures, nor the power of God to raise the dead incorruptible, and fitted for a far different life from the present, so that no difficulty to the doctrine of the resurrection could arise from seven brothers having, in succession, married the same woman agreeably to the law of Moses, Deut. 25. 5. There is no arguing from the state of things in this world as to what will take place hereafter. Let truth be set in a clear light, and it appears in full strength. Having thus refuted their

cavil, our Lord proceeded to show the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection from the books of Moses, because the sadducees received them only, or chiefly, for canonical scripture. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for though the law of Moses supports the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses. But our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection, even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture-treasure lies under ground, that must be digged for.

The Lord declared to Moses that he was the God of the patriarchs, who had died long before; this shows that they were then in a state of existence capable of enjoying his favour, and proves that the doctrine of the resurrection is fully taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New. The resurrection of the wicked is spoken of elsewhere. The question proposed led Jesus to speak of the state of the righteous; but the sadducees were in error to speak of men as being all of one character, and going to one place, without noticing the state of punishment in the other world. Also, the sadducees' notion was, that the union between body and soul is so close, that, when the body dies, the soul dies with it. Now surely, on the same hypothesis, if the soul lives, as it certainly does, the body must some time or other live with it. The charge which the dying patriarchs gave concerning their bones, and that in faith, was an evidence that they had an expectation of the resurrection of their bodies. But this doctrine was reserved for a more full revelation after the resurrection of Christ, who was the first-fruits of them that slept.

Those who are most proud of their reasoning powers, often form the most absurd ideas as to spiritual things. They speak of God as if he were altogether such a one as themselves, and of heaven with carnal ideas and imaginations, so that they are contending with their own shadows when opposing the doctrines of the gospel. They seldom need any other answer than a fair statement of the truths they oppose. Many gainsayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savingly converted; yet even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls, God magnifies his law, magnifies

his gospel, and makes both honourable. All errors arise from not knowing the scriptures and the power of God.

In this world death removes one after another, and so ends all earthly hopes, joys, sorrows, and connexions. How wretched they who look for nothing better beyond the grave. The thoughts of heavenly happiness are most acceptable to the believer, when he considers it as a higher state of existence, in comparison with which earthly enjoyments are of no value. There, the God of Abraham will be the portion of all his believing children, and they will possess fulness of joy at his right hand for evermore.

32. Our Lord here proved the resurrection of the dead inferentially, or by legitimate consequence. He remarked, that God is not the God of the dead, (that word being equivalent to annihilation in the sense intended by the sadducees, who held that the soul vanished with the body,) but of the living; whence it follows, that if he be the God of Abraham, &c. they have not perished.—*T. H. Horne.*

§ 115. Ver. 34—40. *The substance of the commandments*

The pharisees were more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the sadducees opposed. An interpreter of the law asked our Lord a question to try him, or tempt him; to try, not so much his knowledge, as his judgment. It was a question disputed among them. And it is well that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer.

The love of God is the first and the great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commands of the first table. We are to love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Some make these to signify, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind are the will, affections, and understanding. Our love of God must be a sincere love, not in word and tongue only. It must be a strong love; as we must praise him, so we must love him, with all that is within us, Ps. 103. ~~and~~ love him more than any thing else; this way the stream of our affections must entirely run. The heart must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. This is the first and great commandment; for obedience to this, is the spring of obedi-

ence to all the rest, which is only acceptable when it flows from love.

To love our neighbour as ourselves, is the second great commandment. It is like the first, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our love to God, whom we have not seen, 1 John 4. 20. It is implied, that we do, and should love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified; but there is a self-love which is the rule of the greatest duty. We must have a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies. It is prescribed, that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We must have good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves; in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour.

Observe, this is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion, which were at first written in men's hearts, revived by Moses, and enforced by the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all comes to nothing. All depends on these two commandments, that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake, for the fulfilling of the law is love, Rom. 13. 10, and the end of the law is love, 1 Tim. 1. 5. Into these two great commandments, therefore, let our hearts be delivered as into a mould; in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names and strifes of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hung, and that to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these precepts let every thing else be made to bow.

§ 115. Ver. 41—46. *Jesus questions the pharisees.*

When Christ had baffled his enemies, and exposed them by his answers to their questions, he proposed one to them. He asked, what thoughts they had of the promised Messiah? When they had said that he would be the son of David, he asked why David, speaking by the Spirit of God, had called the Messiah, Lord, or Governor, seeing he was to be his descendant? He quotes Ps. 110, which psalm the scribes themselves understood of Christ; of him it is certain the prophet

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1—14. M. 12. 38—40. L. 20. 45—47.  
 § 116. Ver. 1—12. *Jesus reproves the scribes and pharisees.*

there speaks; and it is a prophetic summary of the doctrine of Christ; it describes him executing the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation, and also in his exaltation. If he was to be a mere man, who would not exist till many ages after David's death, with what propriety could his forefather call him Lord? This question is equally applicable to modern socinians. The pharisees could not answer it, and asked Jesus no more questions. Nor can any solve the difficulty except he allows the Messiah to be the Son of God, and equally with the Father David's Lord, and Lord of all, at the time David thus spoke of him. At the appointed season he took upon him human nature, and so became God manifested in the flesh; in this sense he is the Son of man and the Son of David. Of this the Old Testament had given abundant testimony, but the pharisees overlooked what had been said, and expected a temporal deliverer instead of a spiritual Redeemer.

It is evident that the perplexity Jesus put upon his opponents lay in the fact of David's representing the Messiah, who was his own descendant, as his superior, his sovereign, exercising a dominion which is described in characters not to be conceived in a merely created and dependent being.—(95.)

It behoves us above all things seriously to inquire, What think we of Christ? What are our views of his person, his priesthood, his atonement, his intercession, his power, truth, and love? Is he altogether glorious in our eyes, and precious to our hearts? Do we trust in him as the Son of God, and submit to him as the King of Israel? Do we apply to Him in all his characters and offices? Do we desire that all his enemies should be put under his feet, without excepting any of our sinful passions? Do we deem Him entitled to all our honour and service, and infinitely more? According to a man's practical judgment in these matters, his state and conduct will be. The temper of his mind, his judgment, and all his concerns will be influenced by his view of the subject. May Christ then be our joy, our confidence, our all: may we daily see more of his glory and value, and experience more of his love. May we daily be more conformed to his image, and devoted to his service. Then we shall best silence the false accusations of our enemies.

The scribes and pharisees were the stated teachers and rulers of the nation. In these respects they sat in Moses' seat, for they explained the law of Moses, and enforced obedience to it. Whatever, therefore, they taught from *that source* the people ought to practise; but no argument can be grounded on this place, that men are to follow the instructions or to obey the commands of any, further than they agree with the word of God. And the people were in no respect to imitate their works, as they did not practise what they taught, while by enforcing great exactness in ceremonial observances, they laid heavy burdens on the people, which they found methods of dispensing with, so far as regarded themselves. Our Saviour here specifies their works. They are charged with hypocrisy or dissimulation in religion; a crime which cannot be inquired of at men's bar: we can only judge according to outward appearance; but God, who searcheth the heart, can convict of hypocrisy; and nothing is more displeasing to him, for he desireth truth. They were all for show, and nothing for substance, in religion.

1. They made broad their phylacteries. These were scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written, with great nicety, these four paragraphs of the law, Exod. 13. 2—10; Exod. 13. 11—16; Deut. 6. 4—9; Deut. 11. 13—21. to be worn on their foreheads and left arms. It was a tradition of the elders, which had reference to Exod. 13. 9, and Prov. 7. 3, where the expressions seem to be figurative, intimating no more than that we should bear the things of God in our minds, as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes. The pharisees made broad these phylacteries, that they might be thought more holy, and strict, and zealous for the law than others. It is good to excel in real piety, but not to exceed in outward shows.

2. They enlarged the borders of their garments. God appointed the Jews to make fringes upon their garments, Numb. 15. 38, to be a memorandum to them of their being a peculiar people; but the pharisees must have them larger than ordinary, as if they were thereby more religious than others. Also, they affected



pre-eminence and superiority, and prided themselves extremely in it. Pride was the darling, reigning sin of the pharisees, the sin that did most easily beset them, and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to witness against. They courted and coveted places of honour and respect at feasts, and in the synagogues. It plainly shows pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to public worship, unless they can look fine, and make a figure there. Also they sought titles of honour. It was but a little before Christ's time that the Jewish teachers had assumed the titles of rabbi, rah, and rabban, which signifies great or much. And they laid such stress upon them, that they gave it for a maxim, that "he who salutes his teacher, and does not call him rabbi, provokes the Divine Majesty to depart from Israel." For him that is taught in the word to give respect to him that teaches, is commendable; but for him that teaches to love it, and demand it, to be puffed up with it, and to be displeased if it be omitted, is sinful and abominable: instead of teaching, he has need to learn the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is humility.

Jesus cautions his disciples against being like them, to challenge titles of honour and dominion to themselves, ver. 8, 10. They were not to accept the title of rabbi, because they had one Master, even Christ himself, and they were all as brethren equally dependent on and subject to their common Lord. This is twice repeated. It does not forbid men to show respect and gratitude to those who have been the means of their spiritual good; but they are forbidden to look up to any as having dominion over their faith, as entitled to implicit submission, or as having authority over their consciences. If these rules were proper for the apostles, they must be still more suitable for others, and it is evident they were given with a prophetic view of the abuses that have since been witnessed in the church.

How contrary is all this to the spirit of christianity! The consistent disciple of Christ desires most to commune with his Father in secret; he is pained by being put into chief places, instead of loving them; as he is disposed to choose the lowest place, and to prefer others in honour to himself. But who that looks around on the visible church, would think this was the spirit required? It is evi-

dent there are many antichrists, yea, some measure of this antichristian spirit prevails in every religious society, and in every one of our hearts. We have all much to learn and much to unlearn upon this subject. Our Master frequently pressed it upon his disciples, to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all offices of christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he hath set us an example. Here is good reason for this. Consider the punishment intended for the proud, and the preferment intended for the humble.

2. The Jewish teachers sat while they expounded the law.

5. Phylacteries. Slips of parchment on which passages of the law were written. See general note on the Jewish Sects, and on Deut. 6. 4-9.

6. Not rooms, but places. The ancients took their meals in a reclining posture, and this refers to their position with regard to the uppermost part of the table, or place of honour.

§ 116. Ver. 13-33. *Crimes of the pharisees.*

In these verses we have eight woes levelled directly against the scribes and pharisees by our Lord Jesus Christ. He came to bless, and loved to bless; but, if his wrath be kindled, there is surely cause for it: who shall entreat for him whom the great Intercessor pleads against?

1. They were sworn enemies to the gospel of Christ, and consequently to the salvation of the souls of men. The scribes and pharisees ought to have contributed their assistance, by opening the scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at the Messiah and his kingdom, in their proper sense. Thus they might have helped thousands to heaven; but, instead of this, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; they made it their business to excite in the minds of people prejudices against Christ and his doctrine. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but worse to keep others from him.

2. They made religion and the form of godliness a cloak to their covetous practices and desires. They aimed to enrich themselves; this being their chief end, all consideration of justice was laid aside, and even widows' houses were sacrificed to this. For a pretence they made long prayers; some Jewish writers tell us, that they spent three hours at a time in the formalities of meditation and prayer. Where there are many sins to be confessed, and many wants to pray for the supply of, and many mercies to give

thanks for, there is occasion for long prayers. But the pharisees' long prayers were made up of vain repetitions, and were for a pretence. It is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety, however it passes now, will be reckoned double iniquity.

3. While they were such enemies to the conversion of souls to christianity, they were very industrious in perverting them to their faction. And what did they aim at? Not the glory of God and the good of souls, but that they might have the credit and advantage of making proselytes. The industry of the pharisees herein may show the negligence of many who would be thought to act from better principles, but will be at no pains or cost to propagate the gospel. Carnal hearts seldom shrink from the pains necessary to carry on carnal purposes. Perverted proselytes are commonly the greatest li-  
gots. The most bitter enemies to the apostles in all places, were the Hellenist Jews, who were mostly proselytes.

4. Their seeking their own worldly gain and honour more than God's glory, put them upon coining false distinctions. Though the condition of those whose guides are blind, is very sad, yet that of the blind guides themselves is still more woful. An oath is an appeal to God, and to make this appeal to any creature, is to put that creature in the place of God: see Deut. 6. 13. They preferred the gold before the temple, and the gift before the altar, to encourage people to bring gifts to the altar, and gold to the treasurers. Gain being their godliness, by a thousand artifices they made religion truckle to their worldly interests. Corrupt church guides make things to be sin or no sin, as it serves their purposes; and lay much greater stress on that which concerns their own gain, than on that which is for God's glory and the good of souls. Christ shows the folly and absurdity of this distinction. He rectifies the mistake, by reducing all the oaths they had invented, to the true intent of an oath.

5. They were very strict and precise in smaller matters of the law, but careless and loose in weightier matters. Sincere obedience is universal, and he that from a right principle obeys any of God's precepts, will respect them all. All the things of God's law are weighty, but those are most so, which most express inward holi-

ness in the heart; the instances of self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to God, in which lies the life of religion. Judgment and mercy toward men, and faith toward God, are the weightier matters of the law, the good things which the Lord our God requires, Mic. 6. 8, to do justly, and love mercy, and humble ourselves by faith to walk with God. In their doctrine they strained at gnats, warned people against even the least violation of the tradition of the elders. In their practice they strained at gnats, heaved at them with a seeming dread as if they were afraid of sin in the least instance; but they made no difficulty of sins, which, in comparison with them, were as a camel to a gnat. It is not the scrupling a little sin that Christ here reproves,—if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained out,—but the doing that, and then swallowing a camel. In lesser matters of the law to be superstitious, and to be profane in greater, is the hypocrisy here condemned. We may suppose this expression to have been a common proverb.

6. They were more desirous and solicitous to appear pious to men, than to approve themselves so toward God. They are compared to a vessel that is clean washed on the outside, but all dirt within. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. We are really, what we are inwardly. The principal care of every one of us should be to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. The main business of a christian lies within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit. Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, those must first be mortified and subdued. Those sins must be conscientiously abstained from, which the eye of God only is a witness to, who searcheth the heart. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy; but if renewing, sanctifying grace make clean the inside, that will influence the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart and spirit be made new, there will be newness of life; here therefore we must begin with ourselves.

7. They were fair without, like sepulchres, which appear beautiful on the outside. The righteousness of the scribes and pharisees was like ornaments of a grave, or dressing up a dead body, only for show.

They were foul within, like sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness: so vile are our bodies, when the soul has deserted them! Thus were they full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

8. They pretended kindness for the memory of the prophets who were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those that were present with them. They built their tombs, and garnished their sepulchres. God can extort, even from the worst men, acknowledgments to the honour of piety and holiness; and 'carnal people can honour the memories of faithful ministers that are dead; because they do not reprove them, nor disturb them, in their sins. They protested against the murder of them; yet they were at this time plotting to murder Christ, to whom all the prophets bore witness. The deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears very much in that while they go down the stream of the sins of their own day, they fancy they should have swum against the stream of the sins of the former days; that, if they had enjoyed other people's opportunities, they would have improved them more faithfully; that if they had been in other people's temptations, they would have resisted them more vigorously; though they improve not the opportunities they have, nor resist the temptations they are in. We sometimes think, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, we should not have despised and rejected him, as men then did; yet Christ in his Spirit, in his word, in his ministers, still is no better treated. By their own confession, it was the great wickedness of their forefathers to kill the prophets; so that they knew the fault, and yet were themselves guilty of the same. Those who condemn sin in others, and yet allow the same or worse in themselves, are most inexcusable, Rom. 1. 32: 2. 1. They knew they ought not to have been partakers with persecutors, and yet were the followers of them. Such self-contradictions will amount to self-condemnations in the great day.

Christ here proceeds to give them up as irreclaimable. He knew they were now contriving his death, and in a few days would accomplish it. God will bear long, but the time will come when he can no longer forbear, Jer. 44. 22. Children fill up the measure of their fathers' sins when they are gone, if they persist in the same, or the like. That national guilt which

brings national ruin, is made up of the sin of many in several ages; for God justly visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children that tread in the steps of it. It is just with God to give those up to their hearts' lusts, who obstinately persist in the gratification of them.

Here is their description; Ye serpents. He gives men their true characters, and puts contempt upon the proud. Also their doom—The damnation of hell will be the fearful end of all impenitent sinners. But there is a way of escaping the damnation implied here; some are delivered from the wrath to come. Yet of all sinners, those of the spirit of the scribes and pharisees, are least likely to escape; for repentance and faith are necessary to that escape, and how will they be brought to these, who are so conceited, and so prejudiced against Christ and his gospel, as they were? How could such enemies to God, his truth and salvation, escape the damnation of hell by any of their hypocritical observances?

15. Child of hell, an Hebraism for, deserving of, or doomed to hell.

23. Mint, dill, (margin,) and cummin, insignificant garden herbs.

24. Strain out, or off; "at" is an error in printing the early editions of the English version. The Jews, and also the Greeks and Romans, carefully strained their wines, the former as ceremonially unclean, Lev. 11. 23, the latter to have the liquor more pure. "Strain out."—*Cranmer's Bible*.

27, 29. It was usual to whitewash graves, that persons might avoid polluting themselves by touching them. It was customary to show respect for the dead by repairing their tombs.

§ 116. Ver. 34—39. *The guilt of Jerusalem.*

Christ here speaks in his own name, and as acting on his own authority. He was about to send his apostles and evangelists to declare his salvation to the Jewish nation, but he foresaw the treatment they would undergo. He sends them to the Jews first. They began at Jerusalem; and, wherever they went, they made the first tender of gospel grace to the Jews. The Jews would be left to their infatuated conduct, that they might ripen for that destruction the nation had so long deserved; and that the guilt and punishment of all the righteous blood shed from the murder of Abel, might be laid upon that generation, who were about to exceed all the wickedness of this kind that had ever been committed. Jerusalem, that ought to have been a holy city, is characterised as the murderer of God's prophets and messengers.

After this introduction, our Lord proceeds to declare the miseries the inhabitants of that city were about to bring upon themselves, but he does not take any notice of the sufferings he was to endure. The emblem of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings, is used with respect to Jehovah in several places of the Old Testament, Ruth 2. 12; Ps. 36. 7; 91. 4; and it is only in and through Jesus that Jehovah takes sinners under his gracious protection. All nature does not afford a more apt emblem of the Saviour's tender love to those who trust in him, and his faithful care of them; his power also is equal to the trust he has undertaken. He bare the storm of Divine justice against our sins to save us from it; and he suffered, being tempted, that he might succour us. He calls sinners to take refuge under his tender protection, keeps them safe, and nourishes them to eternal life. He had for ages, by his prophets, warned and invited the children of Jerusalem to take shelter under his Almighty wings, before he called them by his personal ministry, but they would not come; so that their ruin was owing to their obstinate unbelief and rebellion. Some might, indeed, come to him for salvation, but their national ruin was absolutely determined, the temple and city would soon be levelled with the ground, the nation would be excluded from the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, till they became willing to submit to him who came to them in the name of the Lord. Their present dispersion and unbelief, and their future conversion to Christ, were here foretold.

Jerusalem and her children had a large share of guilt, and their punishment has been signal. But ere long deserved vengeance will fall on the christian church so called. In the mean time the Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to him, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings; and even when despisers and enemies are made willing to welcome his salvation, they shall see his glory and rejoice in his love. There is nothing between sinners and eternal happiness but their proud, carnal, and unbelieving unwillingness. May we, then, hear His voice, and take shelter under his Almighty protection. Thus we may pass safely through the trials of life, and the storms of death. Then, in the solemn day of judgment, we shall see Him in the glory of the Father, and all the holy angels, and rejoice in his

coming to perfect our redemption, and complete our happiness.

35. There has been considerable discussion respecting the person here meant. Zechariah the son of Berechiah the prophet probably is meant, but some think that Zacharias the high priest, slain by order of Joash, 2 Chron. 24. 20, 21, is referred to. The latter was the son of Jehoiada; but that name has the same meaning as Barachias, and it was common for the Jews to have two names. The space between the altar in the court and the wall of the temple, was considered as a place of refuge, even for criminals.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1-51. M. 13. 1-37. L. 21. 5-36.

§ 118. Ver. 1-3. *Christ foretells the destruction of the temple.*

Our Lord having finally departed from the temple, and ended his public ministry with the reproofs and predictions contained in the close of the preceding chapter, the disciples came and pointed out to him the magnificence, beauty, and stability of the temple. Its construction was such, that no one who did not speak with Divine authority, would have delivered such a prediction as follows, that not one stone shall be left upon another of all this vast and strong pile of buildings.

As grieving that this house should be left desolate, they showed him the buildings. They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they so much admired, when the people were wicked, 2 Chron. 7. 21. The house which is high, sin will bring low.

Christ foretells the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place. A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory, will help to take us off from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body soon will be food for worms, and the most magnificent building a ruinous heap. And shall we then set our eyes upon that which so soon is not, and look upon that with so much admiration, which ere long we shall certainly look upon with so much contempt? See ye not all these things? There is a sight of these things which will do us good; so to see them as to see through them, and see to the end of them.

Our Lord having proceeded with his disciples to the mount of Olives, where the temple was full in view, they asked him some questions concerning the events he had mentioned. As Tertullian states,

being asked by his disciples when those things which he had intimated concerning the desolation of the temple should take place, he set before them the order of the times, first concerning the Jews till the destruction of Jerusalem; and then concerning men in general till the end of the world.

1, 2. See the general note on the temple.

3. This prophecy of our Lord has excited very great inquiry among commentators, and four opinions are entertained on this mysterious and important subject. 1. Confining it wholly to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. 2. Including the second advent of Christ in the regeneration, according to the Jewish expectation. 3. Substitutes for the latter the advent of Christ at the general judgment. 4. Unites the three preceding. *Hales* considers that the last opinion retains what is correct, rejects what is not so in the others, and accords with the revelations to Daniel and John. He traces the whole three in the statement of Matthew. 1. When shall these be? 2. and what the sign of thy presence? 3. and what the sign of the conclusion of the world?

The second question is omitted by Luke and Mark, the third by Luke, which appears consistent with the plans of their gospels; but it is impossible to enter into particulars in a note. Many valuable commentators consider that to ver. 28 relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, and from thence the events to the final judgment are spoken of, including the second coming of Christ, but that they are purposely intermixed and left obscure. *Hales* considers ver. 27—30, 32—42, Luke 21. 24, 33—35, Mark 13. 28—33, as containing signs of Christ's presence at the regeneration. He considers ver. 34—46 of this chapter as signs of the end of the world, and the general judgment. *Townsend* adopts the second hypothesis, considering that the disciples viewed the coming of Christ and the end of the world or age, as events nearly connected. See also *Whitby*. The Jewish rabbis taught, that at the coming of the Messiah there should be a resurrection of the just, this world should be wasted, or ended, and a new one introduced for a thousand years; and after that, eternity should succeed. The disciples ask when Christ will come, not finally to judgment, but in the demonstration of the Messiah to produce this change.—*Elsey* from *Lightfoot*. The reader is referred to the comment and notes on Mark 13. and Luke 21. for further observations and illustrations of this important passage.

§ 118. Ver. 4—28. *The troubles before the destruction of Jerusalem.*

The disciples had asked concerning the times, *When* these things should be? Christ gives them no answer to that, for it is not for us to know the times, Acts 1. 7; but they had asked, *What* shall be the sign? That question he answers fully, for we are concerned to understand the signs of the times, ch. 16. 3. The prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand—the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of

Christ's kingdom in the world; but it also looks forward to the general judgment; and toward the close, points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples, tends more to engage their caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen, than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. This is that good understanding of the times which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do.

1. Christ here foretells the going forth of deceivers. Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors. There should appear false prophets, ver. 11, 24; the deceivers would pretend to Divine inspiration, an immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such there had been formerly, Jer. 23. 16; Ezek. 13. 6, as was foretold. Deut. 13. 1. There should appear false Christs, coming in Christ's name, ver. 5, assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him. These false Christs and false prophets would have emissaries busy in all places, ver. 23. When public troubles are great and threatening, people will catch at any thing that looks like deliverance; then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them. Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die with them; whereas Christ is all in all, and meets his people with a blessing in every place where he records his name.

They shall show great signs and wonders, ver. 24, not true miracles those are a Divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to the rule given of old, Deut. 13. 1—2. Even if the sign or wonder come to pass, yet follow not him that would draw you to serve other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you. It is not said, They shall work miracles, but, They shall show great signs; only a show; they impose on men's credulity, or deceive their senses.

They shall deceive many, ver. 5, and again, ver. 11. The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls. Neither miracles nor multitudes

are certain signs of a true church. They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, ver. 24. This speaks, 1. The strength of the delusion; it is such that many shall be carried away by it, so strong shall the stream be, even those who were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God will be protection. 2. The safety of the elect in the midst of this danger. "If it were possible," plainly implies that it is not possible, for they are kept by the power of God, that the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not, to be imagined, for whom he did predestinate, he calleth, justified, and glorified, Rom. 8. 30. Of all that were given to Christ, he will lose none, John 10. 28.

Our Saviour repeatedly cautions his disciples to stand upon their guard against false teachers. Christ's warnings are designed to engage our watchfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they will be preserved by the use of appointed means, and regard to the cautions of the word. We are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

We must not hearken to every pretender, nor follow every one that points us to a new Christ, and a new gospel, ver. 26. Many a man's vain curiosity to go forth, has led him into fatal apostasy; our strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace.

II. Our Lord foretells wars and great commotions among nations, ver. 6, 7. When Christ was born there was universal peace in the empire. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword never departed from them, because he had given it a charge against a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath.

Here is, 1. A prediction of the event of the day; you will now shortly hear of wars, and rumours of wars. See how terrible it is, Jer. 4. 19, Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of wars! Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after new things, cannot but hear the rumours of war. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those who will not

hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; See that ye be not troubled. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yes, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid, no not of the evil tidings of wars. Be not put into confusion or commotion; see that ye are not. There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart; but it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts, even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, because we are bid to expect this; the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted. The consideration of the unchangeableness of the Divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing that which is appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is a quarrel with that appointment.

Again, because we are still to expect worse. The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments, more vials of wrath must yet be poured out. more woes are yet to come; therefore do not give way to fear and trouble, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you. It is vain to conclude from such events, that the end of the world is at hand; they have occurred again and again in different ages, to answer some wise and righteous purposes, but we are not able to know the designs of God in his mysterious dispensations. To ungodly men the most tremendous temporal judgments are but the beginning of sorrows.

III. Christ foretells other judgments more immediately sent of God,—famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Famine is often the effect of war, and pestilence of famine. When God judgeth, he will overcome; when he begins in wrath, he will make a full end, 1 Sam. 3. 12. When we look forward to the eternity of misery that is before the obstinate refusers of Christ and his gospel, we may truly say, concerning the greatest temporal judgments, they are but the beginning of sorrows; bad as things are with them, there is worse behind.

IV. Christ foretells the persecution of

his own people and ministers, and a general apostasy and decay in religion thereupon. ver. 9, 10, 12; 13. Observe,

1. The cross itself foretold, ver. 9. Of all future events, we are as much concerned, though commonly as little desirous, to know respecting our own sufferings as any thing else. Christ had told his disciples, when he first sent them out, what hard things they should suffer; but they had hitherto experienced little of it. What shall we think of this world, when the best men have had the worst usage in it? It is the cause that makes the martyr, and comforts him; it was for Christ's sake that they were thus hated.

2. The offence of the cross, ver. 10, 12. The ill effects of persecution are here foretold. The apostasy of some. When the profession of christianity begins to cost men dear, then many shall sit loose to it, grow weary of it, at length revolt from it. Also the malignity of others. Persecuting times are discovering times. Wolves in sheep's clothing will throw off their disguise; they shall betray one another, and hate one another. The times must needs be perilous, when treachery and hatred shall have the ascendancy. And the general declining and cooling of most, ver. 12. Though the world always lies in wickedness, yet there are some times in which it may be said, that iniquity does in a special manner abound. Also the abating of love; this is the consequence of the former. Understand it in general of true serious godliness, which is all summed up in love. The devil is the accuser of the brethren, not only to their enemies, which makes persecuting iniquity abound, but one to another, which makes the love of many to wax cold. This gives a melancholy prospect of the times; but it is the love of many, not of all. In the worst of times, God has his remnant that hold fast their integrity. This love abates, but is not quite cast off. The new nature may wax cold, but it shall not decay and vanish away.

3. Comfort in reference to this offence of the cross, for the support of the Lord's people under it, ver. 13. It is comforting to those who wish well to the cause of Christ, that, though many are offended, yet some shall endure to the end. It is comforting to those who do thus endure to the end, and suffer for their constancy, that they shall be saved. They that endure to the end of their days, shall then

receive the end of their faith and hope, even the salvation of their souls. The crown of glory will make amends for all.

V. Our Lord foretells the preaching of the gospel in all the world, ver. 14. It is called the gospel of the kingdom, because it reveals the kingdom of grace, which leads to the kingdom of glory. The gospel is preached for a witness to all nations; that is, a faithful declaration of the mind and will of God concerning the duty which God requires from man, and the recompense which man may expect from God. It is a record, 1 John 5. 11; it is a witness, for those who believe, that they shall be saved, and against those who persist in unbelief, that they shall be damned. The end of the world shall be then, and not till then, when the gospel has done its work in the world.

VI. Christ foretells more particularly the ruin that was coming upon the people of the Jews, their city, temple, and nation, ver. 15, &c. Here he comes more closely to answer their question concerning the desolation of the temple; and what he said here, would be of use to his disciples, both for their conduct and for their comfort, in reference to that great event.

He describes the several steps of that calamity, such as are usual in war.

1. The Romans setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place, ver. 15. Reference being here made to a prophecy, Christ inserts, Whoso readeth, let him understand; whoso readeth the prophecy of Daniel, let him understand that it is to have its accomplishment now shortly in the desolations of Jerusalem. Those that read the scriptures, should labour to understand the scriptures, else their reading is to little purpose.

2. The means of preservation, ver. 16—20. Then let those which are in Judea flee. Let them with all speed quit the city and country, as Lot quitted Sodom, and Israel the tents of Dathan and Abiram. They must flee from Judea to the mountains, those in the remote corners of the land. In times of imminent peril and danger, it is not only lawful, but our duty to seek preservation by all good and honest means; and if God opens a door of escape, we ought to make our escape, otherwise we do not trust God, but tempt him. They must make haste, ver. 17, 18. Life will be in imminent danger. When death is at the door, delays are dangerous. Those who are convinced of the misery of a

sinful state, and the ruin that attends them in that state, and consequently, of the necessity of their fleeing to Christ, must take heed, lest, after all these convictions, they perish eternally by delays. He that has grace in his heart, carries his all with him, when stript of all.

This warning was not kept private. St. Matthew's gospel was published long before the destruction of Jerusalem, so that others might have taken the advantage of it, besides the christians who did so; but their perishing through their unbelief of this, was a figure of their eternal perishing through their unbelief of the warnings Christ gave concerning the wrath to come. He shows it would go hard with mothers at that time, ver. 19; Luke 23. 29. Happy are those who have no children to see them murdered. Observe, ver. 20, it becomes Christ's disciples, in times of public trouble, to be much in prayer; that is never out of season, but in a special manner seasonable when we are distressed on every side. Christ's bidding them pray for this favour, intimates his purpose of granting it to them; and in a general calamity we must not overlook a circumstantial kindness, but see and own wherein it might have been worse. Christ still bids his disciples to pray for themselves and their friends. They must pray, *First*, That their flight, if it were the will of God, might not be in the winter, when the days are short and the ways bad. Though we must take what God sends, yet we may pray against bodily inconveniences. *Second*, That it might not be on the sabbath-day; not on the Jewish sabbath, travelling then would give offence to them; not on the christian sabbath, that would be a grief to themselves. This intimates Christ's design, that a weekly sabbath should be observed in his church. We read not that Christ expressed care about any ceremonial ordinances of the Jews; but for the sabbath he often showed concern. It intimates likewise that it is very uncomfortable to a good man, to be taken by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the sabbath-day. To flee in the winter is uncomfortable to the body, but to flee on the sabbath-day is so to the soul.

3. The greatness of the troubles which should immediately ensue, ver. 21. When the measure of iniquity is full, and when the servants of God are sealed and secured,

then come troubles. Many a city and kingdom has been made desolate, but never any with a desolation like this. No wonder that the ruin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled ruin, when the sin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled sin—even their crucifying Christ. The nearer any people are to God in profession and privileges, the greater and heavier will his judgments be upon them, if they abuse those privileges, and are false to that profession, Amos 3. 2. Lives will be sacrificed so profusely, that one would think, if it lasted long, it would make a full end. But here is one word of comfort—that for the elect's sake these days shall be shortened; not made shorter than what God had determined, but shorter than he might have decreed, if he had dealt with them according to their sins; shorter than what the enemies designed, who would have cut all off, if God, who used them to serve his own purpose, had not set bounds to their wrath; shorter than one who judged by human probabilities would have imagined. Instead of complaining that our afflictions last so long, if we consider our sins, we see reason to be thankful they do not last always; when it is bad with us, it becomes us to say, Blessed be God that it is no worse; blessed be God that it is not hell, endless and remediless misery. And then follows the repeated caution, to take heed of being ensnared by false Christs, and false prophets, ver. 23, &c. who would promise deliverance, but would delude them.

VII. Christ foretells the sudden spreading of the gospel in the world, about the time of these great events, ver. 27, 28. As the lightning comes out of the east, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.

1. The gospel would be remarkable for two things. *First*, It shall fly as the lightning; so shall the gospel be preached and propagated. It is light from heaven, as the lightning. It is God, and not man, that sends the lightnings. *Second*, It is visible and conspicuous as the lightning. Christ preached his gospel openly. It spread far and wide, quickly and irresistibly, like the lightning. The propagation of christianity to so many distant countries, of divers languages, by such unlikely instruments, destitute of all secular advantages, and in the face of so much opposition, and in so short a time, was one of the greatest miracles ever wrought for its confirmation. Here was Christ upon his



white horse, denoting speed as well as strength, going on conquering and to conquer, Rev. 6. 2. How soon did the gospel-lightning reach the island of Great Britain! Tertullian, in the second century, notices it—The fastnesses of Britain, though inaccessible to the Romans, were occupied by Christ. This was the Lord's doing.

2. Some understand these verses of the coming of the Son of man to destroy Jerusalem, Mal. 3. 1, 2, 5. So much was there of extraordinary display of Divine power and justice in that event, that it is called the coming of Christ. To the most it would be unexpected as a flash of lightning. The Jews were so corrupt and degenerate, so vile and vicious, that they were become a carcase, obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God; they were also so factious and seditious, and every way so provoking to the Romans, that they had made themselves obnoxious to their resentment. The Romans were as an eagle, and the ensign of their armies was an eagle. When a people do by their sin make themselves carcases, putrid and loathsome, nothing can be expected but that God should send eagles to devour and destroy them.

3. It is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, and our gathering together unto him, 2 Thess. 2. 1. He shall come as the lightning. Christ will appear to all the world, from one end of heaven to the other; nor shall any thing be hid from the light and heat of that day; but saints, when they shall be fetched to glory, will be carried as on eagles' wings, Exod. 19. 4.

If the danger of temporal calamities renders it reasonable for men to leave all, and to flee for their lives, how important is it for us to forsake all, that we may win Christ, and be delivered from the wrath to come! He that believes will take warning, and without delay flee for refuge to take hold on the hope set before him; but the unbeliever, having been often warned in vain, will at length perish without remedy. Let us, then, give diligence to make our calling and election sure; then may we know that no enemy or deceiver shall ever prevail against us.

9. Tertullian describes the persecution of the Christians as a war against "the very name," though a man was most virtuous, yet it was crime enough if he was a Christian. Thus were the followers of Christ hated for "his name's sake."

28. All these awful predictions, so minutely described, were exactly fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem. See on Luke 21. 20-28.

§ 118. Ver. 29—41. Christ foretelleth other signs and miseries to the end of the world.

Christ foretells his second coming, ver. 29—31. It is said to be immediately after the tribulation of those days; it is usual in prophetic style to speak of things great and certain, as near and just at hand, to express the greatness and certainty of them. Enoch spake of Christ's second coming as within sight, Behold the Lord cometh, Jude 14. A thousand years in God's sight are but as one day, 2 Pet. 3. 8. The tribulation of those days includes not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but all the other tribulations which the church must pass through; not only its share in the calamities of the nations, but the tribulations peculiar to itself. While the nations are torn with wars, and the church with schisms, delusions, and persecutions, we cannot say that the tribulation of those days is over; the whole state of the church on earth is militant; but when her warfare is accomplished, then look for the end.

Concerning Christ's second coming, it is foretold that there shall be a great change, in order to the making all things new. Then shall be the restitution of all things. It shall be a visible change, such as all the world must notice. It shall be a universal change. The glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus, who will then show himself as the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, will darken the sun and moon; they will have no glory, because of the glory that excelleth, 2 Cor. 3. 10.

The sun and moon shall then be darkened, there will be no more occasion for them. To sinners, that choose their portion in this life, all comfort will be eternally denied. Now, God causes his sun to rise on the earth, but then darkness must be their portion. To the saints, that had their treasure above, such light of joy and comfort will be given as shall supersede that of the sun and moon. What need is there of vessels of light, when we come to the Fountain and Father of light? Rev. 22. 5.

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, ver. 30; the Son of man himself, as it follows, They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds. At his first coming, he was set for a sign

that should be spoken against, Luke 2. 34; but at his second coming, a sign that should be admired. It will certainly be such a clear convincing sign as will fill their faces with shame, who said, Where is the promise of his coming?

All the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall mourn, for the greater part will tremble at his approach; while the chosen remnant shall lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, and their Redeemer. Sooner or later, all sinners will be mourners; repenting sinners look to Christ, and mourn after a godly sort; and they who sow in those tears, shall shortly reap in joy; impenitent sinners shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and, though they laugh now, shall mourn and weep in endless horror and despair.

Then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. He will come with power and great glory: his first coming was in weakness and great meanness, 2 Cor. 13. 4; his second coming will be agreeable to the dignity of his person and the purposes of his coming. The angels shall be attendants upon Christ at his second coming, ver. 31: they are called his angels, which proves him to be God, and Lord of the angels: they shall wait upon him. Their ministration will be ushered in with a great sound of a trumpet, to awaken and alarm a sleeping world, 1 Cor. 15. 52; 1 Thess. 4. 16.

They shall gather together his elect from the four winds. This is the foundation of the saints' eternal happiness, that they are God's elect, the gifts of love to eternity follow the thoughts of love from eternity; and the Lord knows them that are his. The angels shall be employed to bring them together as Christ's servants, and as the saints' friends. The elect of God are scattered abroad; there are some in all places, in all nations; but when that great gathering day comes, there shall not one of them be missing. Distance of place shall keep none out of heaven.

Our Lord answers, ver. 32—35, the former part of the apostle's question concerning the time when these events should take place. Their approach would as certainly be determined by the signs he had mentioned, as the approach of summer by the budding of the fig-tree.

Our Saviour here seems to distinguish the time of the destruction of Jerusalem from that of his second appearance; the

former, ver. 34, 35, the latter, ver. 36, of which he there shows the suddenness. Our Lord declares that, to whatever trials the Jewish nation might be subjected, it should never pass away, or be dissolved as a distinct people, until all the things which he had been predicting were fulfilled. His prophecy reaches to the very day of final judgment, therefore he here, ver. 34, remarkably foretells that Judah, whether unbelieving or believing, shall never cease to exist as a distinct nation so long as this world shall endure.—(29. 100)

Christ's declaration, ver. 35, that though the heavens and the earth pass away, his word shall not pass away, strongly intimates the general disregard and unbelief of man. In few things is our practical unbelief more evident, than in the great disregard of his coming in all our calculations. Men of the world altogether put this out of consideration. They scheme and plan for generation upon generation here, but they plan not with reference to this overwhelming, approaching, and most certain event, which shall control every human scheme, set aside for ever all that God forbids, and introduce another era for the human race.—(5.)

There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called the day of the Lord, because so unalterably fixed. No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any Divine discovery. We all know that there shall be such a day; but none knows when it shall be, no, not the angels. This is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, is, to those who are watchful, a savour of life unto life, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is a savour of death unto death, and makes them more careless.

In these verses, 37—41, we have ideas that may awaken us.

1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge to the old world, ver. 37—39. This is applicable, *First*, To temporal judgments, particularly that which was then hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews. *Second*, To the eternal judgment, Heb. 6. 2. Though notice has been given of it from the time of Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be unlooked for by most; the latter days, which are nearest that day, will produce scoffers.

that say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. 3. 3, 4.

Christ here shows the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came. They were entirely intent on the world and the flesh, when the destruction, which they had such warning of, was at the door. They were secure and careless; they knew not, until the flood came. Knew not! That is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not. People are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures of this world, because they do not know, and believe, and consider the eternity they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright that all these things must shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do. The evil day is not the further off for men's putting it far from them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably, so shall secure sinners, who mock at Christ and his coming, be taken away by the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes, which will be like the coming of the deluge—a destruction from which there is no fleeing.

2. It will be a separating day, ver. 40, 41. Apply this to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching—it divided the world; some believed the things spoken, and were taken to Christ; others believed not, and were left to perish in their unbelief.

If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and on our left, and are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies, and it is a great mercy. But apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made on that day. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy in the field, at the mill, at their usual occupations, and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, it will be with them.

This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. But it speaks abundant comfort to the Lord's people. Are they mean and despised in the world, as the manservant in the field, or the maid at the

mill? Exod. 11. 5. Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are heirs of the kingdom. Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places? The angels will find them there, and fetch them thence. Even now, from the same families and religious societies, death is continually taking one to heaven, and another to hell!

What words can more impressively describe the suddenness of our Saviour's coming. Men will be at their respective businesses, and suddenly a light, eclipsing by its brightness the sun at noon-day, will make every other business be lost in the all-engrossing fact—the Lord of glory appears. Women will be in their domestic employments, some in one way, some in another, but in that moment every other care will vanish, every other work be laid aside, and every heart will turn inward and say, It is the Lord! Am I prepared to meet him? Can I stand before him? Shall I be counted worthy to escape those things that are coming on the earth? This scene may take place very speedily for aught we know; our eyes may soon behold it; we do not assuredly know any impediment of events previously to take place.—(5.)

The readiness and watchfulness our Lord commanded, in prospect of the judgments he foretold, may be applied to every man's departure out of life. For what, in fact, is the day of judgment to the whole world, but the day of death to every individual? Hence the only readiness is, being one with Christ, in union with his Person, regenerated by his Spirit, washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and habitually ready in the lively exercise of faith and hope, for the expectation of his coming. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.—(37.)

29. *Holden* gives a summary of different views respecting this part of the prophecy, see note, ver. 3; and observes, "He who shall examine it carefully will see that every clause may, according as we adopt a literal or figurative exposition, be accommodated to each of these interpretations."

34. The primary meaning of the word generation, is, a race, or family, or nation. It only acquires the signification of a single generation of contemporaries in a secondary sense. Our Lord's declaration therefore will run as follows, "Verily I say unto you, this nation shall not pass away or perish, until all these things shall have been fulfilled."—*Faber*. He cites many authorities from Greek writers to show that the word "generation" is taken in the above sense.

41. The mills used in the east are two flat stones, the uppermost turned by a handle fixed in it, and two women, sitting one on each side, push the handle from one to the other.

§ 118. Ver. 42-51. *Exhortation to watchfulness.*

Observe the duty required; Watch, and be ready. As a sinful state and way is compared to sleep, senseless and inactive, 1 Thess. 5. 4, so a gracious state and way is compared to watching and waking. We must watch for our Lord's coming to us in particular at our death, after which is the judgment, that is, the great day with us, the end of our time. To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we would be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in.

The reasons to induce us to watchfulness and diligent preparations are two.

1. The time of our Lord's coming is uncertain, ver. 42. We know we have but little time to live, but we cannot know that we have a long time to live; much less do we know the time fixed for the judgment. He may come at such an hour as we think not, ver. 44. Though there is such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself; though we know not when he will come, we are sure he will come. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than that of particular presages and prognostications. The children of this world are thus wise, that when they know of a danger approaching, they will stand on their guard against it. If the master of a house had notice that a thief would come such a night, ver. 43, and such a time of the night, he would be up, and listen to every noise. Now, though we know not just *when* our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he *will* come, and come quickly, and without any other warning than what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up. That house is our own souls, which we must keep with all diligence. If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, death and judgment will seize upon all we have.

2. The issue of our Lord's coming will be happy to those that shall be found ready, but very dreadful to those that are not, ver. 45, &c. This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants,

when their lord comes to reckon with them. This exhortation applies to all professed servants of Christ, to ministers especially, who are the stewards appointed to dispense to each individual his portion; warning, instructing, encouraging, reproof, according to every man's character, wants, or comfort. If a man, professing to be the servant of Christ, be an unbeliever, actuated by covetousness, ambition, or love of pleasure; if he suppose his Lord will never come; or that he will have time to get ready before he does come, and neglects it now; he will be cut off, and his portion appointed where he will forever be in anguish and despair.

The soul and body of a godly man at death part fairly, the one cheerfully lifted up to God, the other left to the dust; but the soul and body of a wicked man at death are cut asunder, torn asunder, for to them death is the king of terrors, Job 18. 14. They that choose the world for their portion in this life, will have hell for their portion in the other life. When Christ would express the most severe punishment in the other world, he calls it, the portion of hypocrites. If there be any place in hell hotter than another, as it is likely there is, it will be the allotment of those that have the form, but hate the power of godliness.

May the Lord enable all his ministers to give to the people their portion of meat, even his own wholesome words and life-giving truths; and may he dispose the people to receive them in the love thereof, as the nourishment of their souls; that when our Lord cometh and findeth us so doing, he may pronounce us blessed, and present us to the Father, washed in his blood, purified by his Spirit, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.—(71.)

51. Cutting asunder was an ancient punishment, and as the similitude is often blended with the thing signified, the sufferer being mentioned afterwards as alive, is not a valid objection. But the word is often applied to severe scourging, and the sense seems to be, "As he will miserably scourge him, and consign him to the woful abode of incorrigible criminals, so will the Lord consign the wilfully disobedient disciple to the abode of the hypocrites, that is, to hell."—*Bloomfield*. St. Luke says, "with the unbelievers;" very likely both phrases were used by Christ.—*Gill*.

## CHAPTER XXV.

§ 118. Ver. 1-13. *The parable of the ten virgins.*

This parable is manifestly connected with the preceding chapter, but though

the Jews were in great security before their ruin, it does not appear that the christian church was then in such a condition; and as it appears elsewhere that such will be the secure sleepy state of the church before the second coming of Christ, it seems right and best to understand this parable as having reference to that, and as intended to show what will be the state of professors at that time.—(27.)

The circumstances of the parable of the ten virgins were taken from the marriage customs among the Jews. The proceedings in the great day are illustrated by this similitude. The Bridegroom is our Lord Jesus Christ; he is so represented in the 45th Psalm, Solomon's Song, and often in the New Testament. It speaks his love to, and his faithful covenant with the church. The virgins are the professors of religion, members of the church, but here represented as her companions, Psal. 45. 14. Such only are meant as act so as to give real christians a favourable opinion of them. The office of these virgins is as much their happiness as their duty. They come to wait upon the bridegroom when he appears, and in the mean time to wait for him. See here the nature of christianity. As christians we profess to be attendants upon Christ, to honour him, especially when he shall come to be glorified in his saints; also to be expectants of Christ and his second coming; and to act in our whole conversation with regard thereto.

Those of the same profession and denomination among men, may be of characters different in the sight of God. Sincere christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones. Those are wise or foolish indeed that are so in the affairs of their souls. True religion is true wisdom; sin is folly. The evidence of this character was in what they were to attend to; by that they are judged.

It was the folly of the foolish virgins, that they took their lamps, and only oil enough to make their lamps burn for the present, but no supply if the bridegroom tarried: thus hypocrites have no principle within. They have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, rooted dispositions, and settled resolutions, necessary to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. Their hearts are not truly sanctified and stored with holy affections and disposi-

tions, by the new-creating Spirit of God. They make no provision for what is to come. 'His ruins many professors: all their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours whom they now converse with, not to approve themselves to Christ, before whom they must hereafter appear. The difference between the two characters consists most in the state of their hearts.

It was the wisdom of the wise virgins that they took oil in their vessels, with their lamps. They had a good principle within, which would maintain and keep up their profession. The heart is the vessel which it is our wisdom to get furnished; for out of a good treasure there good things must be brought. Grace is the oil we must have in this vessel. Our light must shine before men in good works; but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion.

During the bridegroom's delay, they all slumbered and slept. The delay represents the space between the real or apparent conversion of these professors and the coming of Christ, to remove them by death, or to judge the world. The bridegroom did not arrive so soon as they expected. What we look for as certain we are apt to think is very near; many in the apostles' times imagined that the day of the Lord was at hand, but it was not so. Christ, as to us, seems to tarry, and yet really does not. Hab. 2. 3. There is good reason for the Bridegroom's tarrying; there are many intermediate counsels and purposes to be accomplished. But though Christ tarry past *our* time, he will not tarry past the *due* time.

The wise virgins kept their lamps burning, but they did not keep themselves awake. Too many good christians grow remiss in preparation for Christ's second coming; they intermit their care, abate their zeal, their graces are not lively, nor their works perfect before God; and, though all love be not lost, yet the first love is left. One degree of carelessness makes way for another. Those that allow themselves in slumbering, will scarcely keep from sleeping; therefore dread the beginning of spiritual decays.

A startling summons was given. Though Christ tarry long, he will come at last. His coming for the relief and comfort of his people, often is when the good

intended seems at the greatest distance ; and his coming to reckon with his enemies, is when they put the evil day furthest from them. Death also often comes when least expected.

Go ye forth to meet Him is a call to those habitually prepared, to be actually ready. The notice given of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will awaken. He shall descend with a shout, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment ; and a cry from the earth also, a cry to rocks and mountains, Rev. 6. 16.

All arose and trimmed their lamps, prepared to receive the bridegroom. This, in the wise virgins, bespeaks actual preparation for the bridegroom's coming. Even those best prepared for death have, upon the immediate arrests of it, work to do to get actually ready, 2 Pet. 3. 14. It will be a day of search and inquiry ; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found, and our souls be carried out toward God in suitable breathings. In the foolish virgins, it denotes a vain confidence and conceit of the goodness of their state, and their readiness for another world. Even counterfeit graces will serve a man to make a show of when he comes to die ; the hypocrite's hopes sometimes blaze when just expiring.

The distress which the foolish virgins were in for want of oil, shows the apprehensions some hypocrites have of the misery of their state, when God opens their eyes to see their folly, and their perishing condition with a lie in their right hand ; or the real misery of their state on the other side death. The hopes fail, the comfort is gone ; how often is the candle of the wicked thus put out ! Job 21. 17. Yet many a hypocrite keeps up his credit, and the comfort of his profession, such as it is, to the last ; but what is it when God takes away his soul ?

They wanted oil to supply their lamps when going out. Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An external profession may carry a man far, but it will not carry him through ; it may light him along this world, but the damps of the valley of the shadow of death will put out such a light. They would gladly be beholden to the wise virgins for a supply. The day is coming when carnal hypocrites would gladly be found in the condition of true christians. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death of the righteous.

They were denied a share in their companions' oil. The peremptory denial is not in the original ; these wise virgins give a reason without a positive refusal. They were inclined to help their neighbours in distress ; but, We must not, we cannot, we dare not do it, lest there be not enough for us and you. Those that would be saved, must have grace of their own. Every man shall give account of himself, and therefore let every man prove his own work. Those that have most grace, have none to spare. The best need more from Christ. These wise virgins gave the best advice the case will bear. Those that deal foolishly in the affairs of their souls, are to be pitied ; for who made thee to differ ? When ministers attend such as have been mindless of God and their souls all their days, but are under death-bed convictions ; they can but tell them what is to be done, if it be not too late ; but the door may be shut before it is done ! It is good advice now, if taken in time, Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Those that would have grace, must have recourse to the means of grace. See Isa. 55. 1.

While they went out to buy, the bridegroom came. With regard to those that put off their great work to the last, it is ten thousand to one that they have not time to do it then. While the poor awakened soul addresses itself, upon a sick-bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, it scarcely knows what to do first ; presently death comes, judgment comes, the work is undone, and the poor sinner undone for ever ! This comes of having oil to buy when we should burn it, grace to get when we should use it.

The bridegroom came. Our Lord Jesus will come to his people, at the great day, will come in pomp, attended with his friends. They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage. To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ, to be in his immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him, in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. Those, and those only, shall go to heaven hereafter, that are made ready for heaven here. The suddenness of death and of Christ's coming to us then, will be no obstruction to our happiness, if we have been habitually prepared.

The door was shut, as usual, when all the company are come. The door was shut, 1. To secure those within. When

glorified saints are put into the heavenly paradise, they are shut in. 2. To exclude those that were out. The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed; those shut out then, will be shut out for ever. Now the gate is strait, yet it is open; then it will be shut, and a great gulf fixed. This was like shutting the door of the ark.

The foolish virgins came when it was too late. Many will seek admission into heaven when it is too late. The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them far in expectations of happiness. They were rejected. We are all concerned to seek the Lord while he may be found; for there is a time coming when he will not be found. Time was when, Lord, Lord, open to us, would have sped well, by virtue of that promise, Knock, and it shall be opened to you; now it comes too late.

The conclusion shows the wisdom and happy effects of being ready, and the folly and misery of mere profession and an unprepared state. How afraid we should be of being deceived, or of deceiving ourselves, where so much is at stake, and so many come short of eternal life. The unexpected summons of death may alarm the christian, but proceeding without delay to trim his lamp, his graces often shine more bright; while the mere professor's conduct shows that his lamp is going out, and is about to be extinguished in utter darkness. 'All we can do for such persons, is, to direct them to Him who supplies the blessings of salvation without money and without price; but dreadful will be their case who seek not for salvation till the time is past!

Watch therefore. Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be wakeful. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord's coming is uncertain; we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore every day and every hour we must be ready. Be in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long.

3. The lamps here mentioned were a kind of torch, made of a piece of iron, or other hard substance, wrapped round with old linen or tow, moistened from time to time with oil. Those of Gideon's soldiers, Jud. 7. 16, were similar. The customs and ceremonies of eastern marriages, still resemble those described in this and other parables. *Word* describes the shutting of the door when the bridegroom had entered. He and others were excluded, and he adds, "Never was

I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable as at that moment, 'and the door was shut.'"

§ 118. Ver. 14-30. *The parable of the talents.*

In this parable the Master is Christ, the absolute Owner of all persons and things, especially of his church. The servants are christians, his own servants, so they are called, they should be devoted to his praise, and employed in his work.

Christ keeps no servants to be idle, they have and they receive their all from him; they have nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Whatever we receive to be made use of for Christ, still the property is his.

The master was travelling into a far country, Eph. 4. 8. When Christ went to heaven, he went with a purpose to be away a great while. He committed to his church truths, laws, promises and powers; he sent his Spirit to enable his servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe those laws, to improve and apply those promises, and to exercise and employ those powers.

He gave talents. Christ's gifts are rich and inestimable, the purchases of his blood. He gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one. When Divine Providence has made a difference in men's ability, as to mind, body, estate, relation, and interest, Divine grace dispenses spiritual gifts accordingly; still the ability itself is from God. Observe, every one had one talent at least to begin with. A soul of our own is a talent we are every one of us intrusted with, and it will find us with work. God divides to every man severally as he will; some are appointed for service in one kind, others in another, as members of the natural body.

Two of the servants were diligent and faithful; as soon as their master was gone, they applied to business. The endowments of the mind must be used in subservience to religion; the enjoyments of the world must be improved for the honour of Christ. The ordinances of the gospel, and our opportunities of attending them, must be improved to the end for which they were instituted, and communion with God kept up by them; and the gifts and graces of the Spirit must be exercised: this is trading with our talents.

They were successful; they doubled their stock. There is a great deal to be

got by industry in religion. The returns were in proportion to the receivings. From those to whom God hath given five talents, he expects the improvement of five. From those to whom he has given but two talents, he expects only the improvement of two, which may encourage those placed in a lower and narrower sphere of usefulness. If they seek to do good to the best of their capacity and opportunity, they shall be accepted, though they do not so much good as others.

The third servant did ill. Doubtless there are many that have five talents, and bury them all; great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them: and if he who had but one talent, be reckoned with for burying that one, much more will they be accounted offenders that have more. And those who have least to do for God, frequently do least of what they have to do.

He digged in the earth, and hid the talent, for fear it should be stolen; he did not mispend it or misemploy it, but he hid it. Treasure heaped together is an evil we often see, Jam. 5.3; Eccl. 6.1, 2; it does good to nobody; and so it is in spiritual gifts—many have them, and make no use of them. Those who have estates, and do not lay them out in works of piety and charity; those who have power and interest, and do not with it promote religion in the places where they live; ministers that have capacities and opportunities of doing good, but do not stir up the gift that is in them, are slothful servants.

He hid his lord's money: whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own, we must give account to our Lord. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we enjoyed. The truth is, the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for making use of us.

It is not meant that the improvement of natural powers by unregenerate man can entitle him to Divine grace. The sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, producing a holy judgment and disposition in the soul, teach a man to make good use of his talents, but this does not make us christians, though it evidences that we are made such by the new creating grace of God. It is the real christian's liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer's servant, in promoting his glory, and the benefit of his people;

the love of Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again.

They produce what they have gained. The master commended them. Christ will call those, and those only, good servants, that have done well; for it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek this glory and honour. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with mere commendation; all their work and labour of love shall be rewarded.

Now this reward is expressed two ways.

In one expression agreeable to the parable. Christ is a Master that will prefer his servants who acquit themselves well. Also in another expression, referring to what is signified; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs of comfort shall be opened to them. This joy is the joy of our Lord; the joy which he himself has purchased and provided for us; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer, when he endured the cross, and despised the shame.

The slothful servant, though he had received but one talent, is called to account for that one. He comes relying that he was able to say, Lo, there thou hast that is thine. Many go securely to judgment, presuming upon pleas that will be overruled as vain and frivolous. Slothful professors, that are afraid of doing too much for God, yet hope to come off as well as those who take pains in religion.

He owns the burying of his talent; he speaks as if he deserved praise for his prudence in running no hazards with it. It is common for people to make a light matter of that which will be their condemnation in the great day. How easily slothful servants will be convicted in the judgment! their own tongues shall fall upon them. He makes his excuse. Good thoughts of God would cause love, and that love would make us diligent and faithful; but hard thoughts of God cause fear, and that fear makes us slothful and unfaithful. His excuse bespeaks the sentiments of an enemy. Carnal hearts are apt to conceive false and wicked opinions concerning God, and thus to harden themselves in their evil ways. But nothing is more unworthy of God, nor more hinders our duty to him, than slavish fear. This



is directly opposite to that entire love the great commandment requires. Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help; they pervert the doctrines of revelation to support such conclusions; they consider their want of inclination to do what is good, as if they were unable. But whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord.

The slothful servant is sentenced to be deprived of his talent. The meaning of this part of the parable we have in the reason of the sentence, To every one that hath shall be given. This may be applied, 1. To the blessings of this life. These we are intrusted with, to be used for the glory of God, and the good of those about us. Now he that hath these things, and useth them for these ends, shall have abundance. Perhaps abundance of these things or at least, abundance of comfort in them, and also of much better things; but from him that hath not, that is, who hath these things as if he had not power to use them, or to do good with them, they shall be taken away. 2. Apply it to the means of grace. God will set an open door before those who are diligent in improving the opportunities they have, Rev. 3. 8, but those who know not the day of their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes.

He is sentenced. In one sense, we are all unprofitable servants, Luke 17. 10, we cannot profit God, Job 22. 2. But to others, and to ourselves, it is required that we be profitable; if we be not, Christ will not own us as his servants: it is not enough not to do hurt, but we must do good, must bring forth fruit; though God is not thereby profited, he is glorified.

His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour goes out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and this serves as a key to the whole. Outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, is, in Christ's discourses, a usual expression of the miseries of the damned in hell. Let us not envy sinners, or covet any of their perishing and dangerous possessions.

27. "With usury," that is, with its produce.

§ 119. Ver. 31-46. *The judgment.*

We have here a most sublime description of the last judgment. There are some passages in it that are paradoxical; but there is no similitude carried through the discourse, therefore it is rather to be called a delineation of the final judgment, than a parable. It is, as it were, the explanation of the former parables. Christ spake upon it openly in the character of the sovereign Judge. Observe, there is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery.

Christ's appearing to judge the world will be splendid and glorious. He shall come, not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as Mediator.

The judgment of the great day will be a general judgment. All must appear before Christ's tribunal; all, of every age of the world, from the beginning to the end of time; all, of every place on earth, even from the remotest corners of the world, the most obscure, and distant from each other.

The distinction will then be made between the precious and the vile. The wicked and godly here dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not always distinguishable one from another; such are the infirmities of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners; and one event is to both: but in that day they will be separated, and parted for ever! This is compared to a shepherd's dividing between the sheep and the goats. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he now feeds his flock like a shepherd, and will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are not. All other divisions will be abolished; but the great distinction of men into saints and sinners, sanctified and unsanctified, will remain for ever; men's eternal state will be determined by it.

The process of the judgment concerning the godly must be first despatched, that they may sit with Christ in the judgment of the wicked, whose misery will be aggravated by their seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, Luke 13. 28. Observe here, He that was the Shepherd, which speaks the care and tenderness wherewith he will make this separation, is here the King, which speaks the authority wherewith he will pronounce the sentence.

He pronounces the saints blessed, and makes them so. Christ having redeemed them from the curse of the law, and purchased a blessing for them, commands a blessing on them. Blessed of his Father; reproached and cursed by the world, but blessed of God. As the Spirit glorifies the Son, John 16. 14, so the Son glorifies the Father, by referring the salvation of the saints to him as the First Cause; all our blessings in heavenly things flow to us from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 3. He calls them to come. O with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day!

The happiness they shall be possessed of is very rich. It is a *kingdom*; which is reckoned the most valuable possession on earth; yet is but a faint resemblance of the blessed state of the saints in heaven. It is a kingdom *prepared*. The Father designed it for them in his thoughts of love, and provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power. The Son purchased it for them, and is entered as the forerunner to prepare a place. And the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, is preparing it for them. It is prepared *for them*: it is in all points adapted to the nature of a soul, and to the new nature of a sanctified soul. It is prepared on purpose for those chosen to salvation through sanctification. It is prepared *from the foundation of the world*. This happiness was designed for the saints, and they for it, from all eternity, Eph. 1. 4. Infinite Wisdom had regard to the eternal glorification of the saints from the first of the creation.

They shall come and *inherit it*. What we inherit is not got by any procurement of our own. It is God that makes heirs, heirs of heaven. We come to an inheritance by virtue of sonship, our adoption; if children, then heirs. It alludes to possessions in the land of Canaan, which passed by inheritance, and could not be alienated longer than to the year of jubilee. Thus is the heavenly inheritance unalienable. The ground of this—For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that any good works of the saints merit the happiness of heaven, our goodness extends not to God; but mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as evidence of an interest in Christ; for Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him, and who patiently continue

in well doing. It teaches us that faith working by love is all in all in christianity; Show thy faith by thy works.

This reason is questioned by the righteous. Glorified saints will be filled with humble admiration, to find such poor and worthless services so richly rewarded. Saints in heaven will wonder that God should so regard them. It is explained by the Judge himself; As you have done it to these my brethren, to one of the least of them, ye have done it to me. Wherever poor saints and poor ministers are, there Christ is ready to receive kindnesses in them.

We are not to suppose that acts of liberality will be a title to eternal happiness. There is no salvation for a sinner but by the free mercy of God; no mercy but through the mediation and merits of his beloved Son; no interest in Christ except by faith in him; no justifying faith but that which worketh by love; no love to Christ which does not imply love to his people, his example, his precepts. But whenever a man, as a habit, shows self-denying beneficence to others, out of love to Christ and gratitude for the blessings of redemption, he gives clear proof that he is a true believer, and in the decisive hour the King of glory will own the least of his chosen flock. Let us, then, abound in works of faith and labours of love. As Quesnel says, Good works done for God's sake through Jesus Christ in the Spirit of the Father and the Son, are here noticed as the characteristics of the vessels of mercy, who shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them; prepared without merits on their part; by a bounty altogether free, but merited by Christ; bestowed on such works as are done in faith, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and are the effects of grace bestowed on those who do them.

Concerning the wicked, those on the left hand, the Judge shall say, Depart from me, ye cursed. Every word has terror in it. In this world they were often called to come to Christ, to come for life and rest, but they turned from his calls; justly are they bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. Depart, ye cursed. Those who would not come to Christ to inherit a blessing, must depart from him under a curse. The righteous are called. The blessed of my Father; for their blessedness is owing to the grace of God, and his blessing alone; but the wicked are called only, Ye cursed, for their damnation is of themselves. Will it not be

misery enough for them to bewail their loss? No, they must depart into torment, grievous as fire to the body, and much more. This fire is the wrath of the eternal God fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of sinners. \* If into fire, may it not be some light or gentle fire? No, it is prepared fire. If into fire, prepared fire, O let it be but of short continuance! No, the fire of God's wrath will be an everlasting fire. They served the devil while they lived, therefore are justly sentenced to be where he is, as those who served Christ are taken to be with him where he is. The fire is prepared, not primarily for the wicked, as the kingdom is prepared for the righteous; but for the devil and his angels. Sinners make themselves associates with Satan by indulging their lusts; and they must share that misery first prepared for him and his associates. The devil and his angels are already made prisoners in that pit, and can worms of the earth think to escape? And observe, sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which it was in their power to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more intolerable will be the doom of persecutors!

Condemned sinners will in vain offer excuses. They that slighted and persecuted poor Christians, would not own they slighted and persecuted Christ. They imagined it was only a company of poor, weak, contemptible people, who made more ado than needed about religion, that they put those slights upon. But those who do so, will be made to know, either in the day of their conversion, as Paul, or of their condemnation, as these, that it was Jesus whom they persecuted.

The punishment of the wicked is first mentioned. It will be an everlasting punishment, for the state is an unalterable state. It can neither be thought that sinners should change their own natures, nor that God should give his grace to change them, when in this world the day of grace was spent, and the means of grace abused. The wicked shall be made to go away into that punishment; not that they will go voluntarily, no, they are driven from light into darkness; it speaks an irresistible conviction of guilt, and final despair of mercy. The righteous shall go away into life eternal. The life of the soul results from its union with God, by the mediation of Jesus Christ. The hea-

venly life consists in the vision and enjoyment of God, in a perfect conformity to him, and an uninterrupted communion with him. It is eternal life. There is no death to put a period to the life itself, nor old age to put a period to the comfort of it, nor any sorrow to imbitter it.

Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way, and so shall our end be. Let us take warning, and seek that faith in Christ which produces love to him and obedience to his commands, that we may abound in fruits of righteousness here, and be numbered among his saints in glory everlasting.

Lord, give us the lively faith of what thou hast here revealed. Lord, prepare us, and cause us to abide in thee, that when thou shalt appear we may have confidence in thee, and not be ashamed before thee at thy coming. May we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren; may we know and believe the love that God hath to us, and dwell in love; herein may our love be perfect, that we may have boldness at the day of judgment.—(83.)

38. The sanhedrim placed those to be acquitted on the right, and those to be condemned on the left.—S. Burder.

The fullest account of the nature of Christ's coming is given to us by our Lord himself, in the three parables in this chapter. That of the ten virgins shows us the need of having our loins girded, our lights burning, and of our being like those who wait for their Lord.—That of the talents shows us how responsible we are for the use of every thing we possess, to that Divine Master who has intrusted all to us.—That of the goats and sheep shows us our King and Saviour coming in his glory with all his holy angels, and acknowledging before the assembled nations all who have proved their faith in him. Well may the Christian's eye and heart be fixed upon this unspeakably momentous event, as the glorious object of his hopes—well may he be continually preparing for that day.—Bickersteth.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

V.1—16. M.14.1—11. L.22.1—6. J.12.2—8.  
V.17—19. M.14.12—16. L.22.7—13.  
V.20—25. M.14.17—21. L.22.21—23. J.13.21,22.  
V.26—29. M.14.22—25. L.22.19,30.  
V.30—35. M.14.26—31. L.22.31—39. J.13.28.  
V.36—46. M.14.32—42. L.22.40—46. J.18.1.  
V.47—75. M.14.43—72. L.22.47—71. J.13.2—27.  
§ 120. Ver. 1—5 The rulers conspire against Christ.

Our Lord had often told of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at hand. At the same time the Jewish sanhedrim were consulting how they might put him to death, and they agreed to attempt it by subtilty rather than open

force, and that not on the feast-day. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but lest there should be an uproar among the people. They knew Christ had great interest in the common people, of whom there was a large concourse on the feast-day. But it pleased God to defeat their intention, as it was proper that Christ, the true paschal Lamb, should be sacrificed for us at that very season, and his death and resurrection would thus be rendered the more public.

3. Joseph surnamed Caiaphas was made high priest about four years before our Lord's crucifixion. He was son-in-law to Annas, who also had been high priest. About two years after this time he was deposed by Vitellius, the governor of Syria, and killed himself about A.D. 38.

§ 110. Ver. 6-13. *Christ anointed at Bethany.*

Probably Simon the leper had been miraculously cleansed by our Lord Jesus, and he expressed his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him. The woman is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Lazarus. She poured ointment upon the head of Christ; this was accounted the highest respect. It may be looked upon as an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed; it signified that she believed in him as God's Anointed. And where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good to bestow upon him.

The disciples said, To what purpose is this waste? This speaks want of tenderness toward the woman. It is true there may be over-doing in well-doing. We must learn to be cautious lest we run into extremes, but let us not be censorious of others. What we may impute to want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather let us aim to do as much as they. We must take heed of thinking that any thing is wasted which is bestowed upon Christ, or the time wasted that is spent in his service, or the money wasted which is laid out in any work of piety. With what care should every one guard against the first workings of avarice! They excused their offence. It is not new for bad affections to be sheltered under specious covers.

Christ reproved his disciples for troubling this good woman. Observe his reason. Those who have a heart to do good, never need to complain for want of oppor-

tunity. We can never fail to find in this world some to whom Christ will have kindness shown as to himself. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good which come seldom, are short and uncertain, and require peculiar diligence to improve while within our power.

The more Christ's servants and their services are cavilled at, the more he manifests his acceptance. This answer had a mystical meaning. She did it for my burial. This was as it were the embalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was done before. The memorial of it should be honourable. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that the preachers of Christ crucified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not but take notice of this passage; and being once enrolled in those records, it could not be forgotten. It would be reported, as a memorial of her faith and love, to all future ages, and in all places where his gospel should be preached. This is a remarkable prophecy. Christ knew that he should influence the evangelists to record this incident, which might appear trivial among the great actions of his public life, and the completion of it has been equally remarkable.

6, 7. Christ was anointed at Bethany six days before the passover, John 12. 1-3, but St. Matthew takes no notice of the circumstance till within two days of the feast. Dick observes that the reason is manifest. It was at this time that Judas offered to betray Christ, and the evangelist, in relating his treachery, returns to give an account of the event which prompted him to it. See the account of the events of the passion week in the general notes. Also John 12.

§ 120. Ver. 14-16. *Judas bargains to betray Christ.*

Judas Iscariot is said to be one of the twelve, as an aggravation of his villany. When there were but twelve, and one of them was a devil, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The chief priests did not make the proposal to him, they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. But there are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to show it.

Judas promised to bring them to Christ, at such a convenient time and place, that they might seize him without danger of an uproar. In their conspiracy against Christ they were at a loss about this, ver.

4, 5. The greater profession men make of religion, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. He did not offer, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, ver. 59. Yet if there had been anything to be alleged against him, that he was an impostor, Judas was the most likely person to have attested it. This is evidence of the innocency of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of his life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

His Master appears to have showed the same kindness to Judas that he did to the rest. He had placed him in a post that pleased him, had made him purse-bearer; and though Judas had embezzled the common stock, for he is called a thief, John 12. 6, yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it. It was not hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but love of the money that made Judas a traitor. What did he want? Was not he welcome wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as he fared? It is not the *lack* of money, but the *love* of money, that is the root of all evil, particularly of apostasy from Christ, 2 Tim. 4. 10.

They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; thirty shekels, which in our money is about three pounds fifteen shillings. A little money went a great way with Judas! By the law, Exod. 21. 32, thirty pieces of silver was the price to be paid for a slave who had been killed by accident—a goodly price at which Christ was valued! Zech. 11. 13.

This seems to have altered their resolution as to the time when they would apprehend Christ. Judas sought opportunity to betray him. It is very wicked to seek opportunity to sin, and to devise mischief; it argues the heart fully set in men to do evil. After he had made that wicked bargain, he had time to repent, and to revoke it; but when lesser instances of dishonesty have hardened the conscience, men become capable of shameless injustice without hesitation.

15. And they weighed to him thirty pieces of silver.—*Schulefeld.* The word is the same as in the Greek version of Zech. 11. 13.

121, 122, 124. Ver. 17—25. *The passover.*

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. It was a tradition

of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

Observe the place which was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples upon their inquiry. He knoweth those hidden ones who favour his cause, and will graciously visit all who are willing to receive him, as he did this man.

Tell him, My time is at hand; Christ means the time of his death, elsewhere called his hour, John 8. 20; 13. 1; the time, the hour fixed in the counsel of God. He knew when it was at hand. We know not our time, Eccl. 9. 12, and therefore we must be always ready.

Tell him, I will keep the passover at thy house, as the Master. Thus, when Christ by his Spirit comes into the heart, he demands admission, as one whose own the heart is, and cannot be denied; and he gains admission, as one who has all power in the heart, and cannot be resisted. His people shall be willing, for he makes them so. I will keep the passover with my disciples. Wherever Christ is welcome, his disciples should be welcome too. When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.

The disciples did as Jesus had appointed. Those who would have Christ's presence with them in the gospel passover, must strictly observe his instructions. We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples at the passover supper. The usual subject at that ordinance was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, Exod. 12. 26, 27; but the great Passover is now ready to be offered, and the discourse of that engages their attention more deeply. He had often told them that the Son of man should be betrayed; now he tells them that one of them should do it, that, when they saw it, they might have their faith in him not diminished but confirmed.

The disciples were troubled that they were left at uncertainty which of them it was. Though Judas was a thief, yet those intimate with him were not jealous of him. It is possible for a hypocrite to go far undiscovered and unsuspected. Though not conscious to themselves of any such inclination, they feared the worst, and asked Him who knows us better than we know ourselves, Lord, is it I? It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves, especially in trying times.

We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, therefore have reason not to be high-minded, but fear. Christ tells them, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, that is, one of you who are now with me at the table. He mentions this, to make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is great aggravation of our fulseness to him. Was Christ betrayed by a disciple? So it was written, Psa. 41. 9; He that did eat bread with me, has lifted up the heel against me. The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them. But woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. Though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that does not make the sinner's condition less woful. The ruin which attends those who betray Christ is so great, that it were better by far not to be at all, than to be thus miserable. This could not be the case if they were ever to be freed from punishment, and made partakers of eternal happiness, for that would infinitely overbalance all temporary suffering.

Judas asked, Is it I? avoiding the suspicion of guilt from his silence. Many, whose consciences condemn them, are very industrious to justify themselves before men. Christ soon answered his question. Those who betray Christ will, some time or other, betray themselves, their own tongues will be their accusers.

Heart-searching examination, and fervent prayers, are especially proper before the Lord's supper, that, as Christ our Passover is now sacrificed for us, we may keep this commemorative feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, renewing our repentance, our faith in his blood, and surrendering ourselves to his service.

18. Jerusalem was considered as the common property of the Jewish people, and all strangers of that nation had the right of lodging there gratis.—*T. H. Horne*. This was especially the custom at the feast of the passover.

23, 25. In the east it is customary for those who sit near each other at table, to take food with their hands out of the same dish. Some think that Judas reclined so near to Christ, that he partook of the juice of the bitter herbs from the same dish, though there were several on the table, and thus Jesus might have answered the inquiry of Judas without the others hearing it.

126, 125, 128, 131. Ver. 26—30. *Christ institutes his holy supper.*

We have here the institution of the

great gospel-ordinance of the Lord's supper. This ordinance is to us the passover supper, by which commemoration is celebrated of a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt. A sacrament needs to be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significance from a Divine institution.

The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread. As the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment, ch. 4. 4; 6. 11, so the life of the soul is maintained by Christ's mediation.

Jesus took bread, and blessed it; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. He brake it; which denotes the breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our use; He was bruised for our iniquities, as bread-corn is bruised, Isa. 28. 28, though a bone of him was not broken. He gave it to his disciples, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast.

He here tells them what they should do with it: "Take, eat;" accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, approve of it, consent to it, submit to his grace and to his government. Believing on Christ, is expressed by receiving him, John 1. 12, and feeding upon him, John 6. 57, 58. Meat looked upon, be the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish; it must be fed upon, so must the doctrine of Christ. "This is my body;" not this bread, but this eating and drinking. Believing, carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. "This is my body," spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs language like Exod. 12. 11. It is the Lord's passover. Upon a much-mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents or appearance of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine. He gave thanks,

to teach us to look to God in every part of the ordinance. This cup he gave to the disciples with a command, "Drink ye all of it." Why should he so command them all to drink, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Was it because he foresaw that this ordinance would be dismembered by the Romish prohibition of the cup to the laity? Also he gave it with an explication: "For this is my blood of the New Testament." Hitherto the blood of Christ had been represented by the blood of beasts, real blood; but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes.

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament. 1. It is my blood of the new testament, confirmed with the blood of Christ. The covenant God is pleased to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death. 2. It is shed; it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as if it were done. Before you repeat this ordinance, it will be shed. 3. It is shed for many. The atonement was made only for the children of Israel, Lev. 16. 34; but Jesus Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2. 2. 4. It is shed for the remission of sins, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption we have through his blood, is the remission of sins, Eph. 1. 7. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred on all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, the spring of everlasting comfort.

He takes leave of such communion; "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine," that is, now that I am no more in the world, John 17. 11. He assures them of a happy meeting again at last;—"Until that day when I drink it new with you." This may be understood of the joys and glories of the future state, of which the saints shall partake in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; the wine of consolation, Jer. 16. 7, will there be always new.

The solemnity was closed with a hymn; the Jews usually sang at the close of the passover supper Psalm 113. and the five that follow. Singing psalms is a gospel ordinance. It is very proper after the Lord's supper, as an expression of our joy

in God through Jesus Christ, and a thankful acknowledgment of that great love wherewith God has loved us in him. It is not unseasonable even in times of sorrow and suffering; the disciples were in sorrow, Christ was entering upon his sufferings, and yet they could sing a hymn together. Our spiritual joy should not be interrupted by outward afflictions. When this was done, they went to the mount of Olives. After we have received the Lord's supper, it is good for us to retire for prayer and meditation, and to be alone with God.

While we contemplate the outward signs of Christ's body broken and his blood shed for the remission of our sins, let us recollect the feast cost him as though he had literally given his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. There must be a real, though spiritual partaking of him, and appropriation of his salvation to our souls, or we have no benefit from his sacrifice. Let no believer neglect the obedience of faith and love, in respect to this command of his dying Saviour. Many profane this sacred ordinance by pharisaical, unbelieving, or careless attendance; others, by absenting themselves, confess their consciousness that they have no part in the blessings of salvation; while many, even true christians, do great harm to their souls by seldom joining his people in thus remembering him. Our communicating ought, indeed, to excite us to redouble watchfulness, but the fear of afterwards being hurt, or even overcome by temptation, never should induce any to neglect obeying the express command of Christ.

Blessed be thy name, O Jesus, and blessed be thy goodness for reconciling us to God, by the offering of thy crucified body, and washing us from our sins in thy blood. Confirm us in this faith, and work in us more and more a lively sense of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. That it might be assuredly believed, and always remembered as the ground of our hope and rejoicing, thou didst institute the sacrament of thy body and blood, and therein continually representest thyself to us in the very act of suffering and dying for our sins. Let the great love wherewith thou hast loved us, take possession of our souls, and so rule in our hearts, that we may love thee, and all mankind for thy sake, evermore praise God for thee, and be accepted through thee, our only Saviour and Redeemer.—(71.)

26. See the general note on the Jewish pass-over and the Lord's supper.

28. The blood of the new covenant.—*Scholzfeld.*

29. This verse is variously interpreted, owing to the different senses annexed to the words "in my Father's kingdom," which some refer to heaven, others to Christ's mediatorial kingdom, Christ's millenarian reign, or to the gospel dispensation. Luke, 22. 18, uses the words "kingdom of God," by which the latter is often designated.—*Holten.*

§ 125. Ver. 31—35. *Christ warns his disciples.*

Jesus now went with his eleven apostles to the mount of Olives, Judas having left them before this. Before they set out, and during their walk, he spake as is recorded in John 14—17. He told them that very night they would meet temptations, and would fall into sin through the fear of man. Therein the scripture would be fulfilled, Zech. 13. 7. "Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten. The scattering of the sheep thereupon, foretold the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, it was each one's care to get furthest from the cross. Yet he gives them the prospect of gathering together after this storm: "After I am risen again, I will go before you." Some make the last words of Zech. 13. 7, "And I will bring my hand again to the little ones," a promise equivalent to this. There is no bringing them back but by bringing Christ's hand to them.

Thus they might be assured of his resurrection from the dead, at which time he would go before them into Galilee. But Peter, in an ignorant spirit of self-confidence, declared he would never be offended though all others should be so. Upon this our Lord solemnly assured him that he would that very night thrice deny his Master! Peter repeated his declaration, and was joined therein by the other apostles. This improper self-confidence was the first step to a fall. There is a proneness in good men to be over-confident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; but it is because we do not know ourselves. Those often fall soonest and foulest, who are most confident of themselves. Those are least safe, who are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such; they are most off

their guard; God leaves them to themselves, to humble them.

§ 131. Ver. 36—45. *Christ's agony in the garden.*

In these verses we have Christ's agony in the garden. It was in a place called Gethsemane. The name signifies, a press for olives. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. He who made atonement for the sins of mankind, voluntarily submitted himself in a garden of suffering, to the will of God, from which man had revolted in a garden of pleasure.—(34.)

Christ took only Peter, and James, and John with him into that part of the garden where he suffered his agony. They had been witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration. Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory. He began to be sorrowful. It was not bodily pain or torment that he was in; but it was from within. The words used are most expressive. They denote the most entire dejection, amazement, anguish, and horror of mind; the state of one surrounded with sorrows, overwhelmed with miseries, and almost swallowed up with terror and dismay. On the saints' cross there is a blessing which enables them to rejoice under it, ch. 5. 10; but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him say, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be a man of sorrows, Isa. 53. 3; he was so; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

He went from them, kneeled down, and afterwards prostrated himself, praying that if possible the cup might pass from him. This showed that had it been possible, consistently with the justice, truth, and holiness of God, he desired to be spared these sufferings as much as any man could have done. But he also showed his perfect readiness to bear their load; he was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation. He grounds his own willingness upon the Father's will. In conformity to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit.

He went away the second time, and prayed, and again the third time; but as it is related here, he did not, in the se-



cond and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. It should be more our care to get our troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to let them taken away. Prayer is the offering up, not only our desires, but our resignations to God. Thy will be done. It seems by ver. 40, that Christ continued an hour in his agony and prayer.

His three disciples were little concerned, they could not keep awake. It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of One who neither slumbers nor sleeps. His enemies were wakeful enough; but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. What is man! What are the best of men when left to themselves! The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without and fears within; and shall we be asleep then?

He gave them a gentle reproof. What! could ye not watch with me one hour? He speaks as amazed to see them so stupid; every word shows the aggravated nature of the case. Sometimes he continued all night in prayer to God, but did not then expect that his disciples should watch with him; only now, when he had but one hour to spend in prayer.

There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to him. There was danger of their being influenced by it. He therefore exhorts them to watch and pray.

We must all be tempted, but we should be much afraid of entering into temptation, by giving our enemies opportunity of obtaining advantage against us. To be secured from this we should watch and pray, and continually look unto the Lord to hold us up that we may be safe, for our hearts are deceitful above all things, and we are weak through the flesh.

When he came the third time, he left them to be alarmed with the approaching danger. See here how Christ deals with those who suffer themselves to be overcome by security. Sometimes he gives them up to the power of it. Many times he sends some startling judgment to awaken those who would not be wrought upon by the word. But Christ's sufferings were no surprise to him; he knew what, and when he was to suffer. He called them to rise: not, Rise, and let us flee from the

danger; but, Rise, and let us meet it. He intimates to them their folly, in sleeping away the time they should have spent in preparation; now it found them unready, and was terror to them.

It behoves us to inquire into the cause of our Lord's agony. Doubtless he had all along a clear and full view of the sufferings he was to endure, yet he spoke with the greatest serenity till this time. His disciples, when martyred, have often endured the most painful tortures of body without being thus disturbed, and Christ was infinitely superior to them. We must conclude there was something peculiar in his cup of suffering. The treachery of Judas, the cowardice of the apostles, and all outward circumstances, are wholly insufficient to satisfy as to the causes. Neither could there be in this case the horrors of a guilty conscience, or the conflict of sinful passions, which cause the most intense misery to the human mind. Nor could there be any despair as to the final issue of these sufferings.

We cannot fully understand this, but we may regard it in the light thrown on it by the scriptures.—Christ sustained the character of a surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins. Accordingly our iniquities were laid upon him; he was made sin for us, and suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust; and scripture ascribes his heaviest sufferings to the immediate hand of God. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he made his soul a sacrifice for sin. The sword of Divine justice was commanded to awake against the Shepherd and smite him, and God spared not his own Son, 1s. 53. 10; Zech. 13. 7; Rom. 8. 32. We may from these and similar scriptures, conclude that the human nature of Christ was, on this occasion, left destitute of all consolatory communications from the Holy Spirit. But it was supported by its union with the Deity, to endure the unknown anguish without sinking under it. He had the fullest discovery to his mind of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immensity of that guilt which he was to expiate; with the most awful views of the Divine justice and holiness, and the punishment deserved by the sins of men. Such a sense of the Divine wrath oppressed his inmost soul as no tongue can express, or imagination conceive. At the same time, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan the

tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion: these would be the more intolerable from his perfect holiness. Thus we may conclude, that Christ now suffered as much of the same kind of misery endured by the condemned spirits, as could possibly consist with his perfect holiness, and assured confidence of a glorious event. Probably the same feelings oppressed his mind, till on the cross he said, "It is finished." We read not that he complained of his outward sufferings while he dolefully exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And did the load of imputed guilt so weigh down the soul of Him concerning whom it is said, He upholdeth all things by the word of his power? Into what an abyss of misery then must they sink whose iniquities are left upon their own heads, a burden too heavy for them to bear! How then will they escape who neglect so great salvation? What a false hope must that of the pharisee or infidel be! it will issue in despair, with that of every one who abuses the doctrine of a free salvation to indulge in wickedness. But here is hope for the desponding penitent. Here we see God's hatred of sin and love to sinners, his justice satisfied and his delight in exercising mercy. Let us resort to Gethsemane to learn repentance, hatred of sin, humility, patience, and self-denying obedience. Here we see our pattern, our motives and encouragements. Here we see the vanity of the world, the evil of sin, and our obligations to live for his glory who suffered for our salvation.

45. Rather as a question, "Do ye sleep on now, and take your rest?" see Luke 22. 46.

§ 132. Ver. 47-56. *Christ betrayed.*

Judas, knowing the place of Christ's retirement, led thither an armed multitude with some of the priests and rulers. To distinguish Jesus, he went up to him and kissed him. Perhaps our Lord had been accustomed to welcome his disciples in this condescending and affectionate manner, then usual. No enemies deserve such execration as those professed disciples that betray Christ with a kiss. Our Lord rebuked his hypocrisy and ingratitude, calling him friend, and demanding why he came thus attended. One of the disciples then drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest. Our Lord reproved this, intimating that their warfare was to be of a spiritual nature. He needed not such help, as an innumerable

company of angels were at his bidding. But then, how should the scriptures be fulfilled, that the Messiah must be cut off, and numbered with the transgressors?

God has no need of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of duty to serve his interests. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was voluntary weakness; he submitted to death. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves that Christ crucified is the power of God.

Christ inquired why they had come out against him thus armed, when he had daily appeared among them unarmed, and only with a few fishermen around him, in the most peaceable manner. If he had not been willing to suffer, they could not conquer him; their weapons would have been as briars before a consuming fire; but, being willing to suffer, it was folly to come thus armed.

Whatever provocations or trials we meet with, we should learn of Jesus to possess our souls in patience, and not to use any weapons except arguments, prayers, and kind actions. Our Advocate will give all needful protection; but when our appointed time is come, we must remove hence.

All this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. The scriptures are fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures which spake of the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus. The disciples all forsook him, and fled. When they perceived that he intended quietly to yield himself up, their boasted courage and resolution failed. His words were thus fulfilled, but their conduct was not excused. Our Lord so far overawed the whole party that they offered no violence to any of the disciples. See John 18. 6-9.

It was their sin; and it was a great sin for those who had left all to follow Jesus, now to leave him for they knew not what. What folly, for fear of death to flee from him whom they knew and acknowledged to be the Fountain of life!

It was a part of Christ's sufferings; it added affliction to his bonds to be thus deserted. Christ in this was made a curse for us, being left as one separated to evil. Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he needed not, so he had not the assistance of any other in working out man's salvation.

§ 133, 134. Ver. 57—68. *Christ before Caiaphas.*

The scribes and elders were assembled, though it was the dead of the night. To gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves natural rest. They were the scribes, the principal teachers, and the elders, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church. These were the most bitter enemies to Christ. The scripture was fulfilled, Ps. 22, 16, The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me.

They that laid hold on Jesus, hurried him into Jerusalem. Peter followed, but it was afar off. There was some love for his Master in his breast, therefore he followed him; but concern for his own safety prevailed. It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those who are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him; to follow Christ afar off, is by little and little to go back from him.

Peter went in, and sat with the servants. It was presumption in him thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so throws himself out of God's protection. He followed Jesus, but it was only to see the end. He should have gone in to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself. It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to inquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is ours.

They examined witnesses against our Lord Jesus. The crimes properly cognizable in their court were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. They sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, yet they found none. The matters alleged were palpable lies, which carried their confutation along with them. At last they met with two witnesses. The words these swore against Jesus were, that he said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. By this they designed to accuse him as an enemy to the temple; when they abandoned other idols, they made an idol of that. 1. The words were mis-recited; he said, Destroy ye this temple, John 2, 19; he spake of a temple his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, I am able to destroy this temple, as if the design against it were his. He said, In three days I will raise it up, a word properly used of a living temple—I will raise it to life. They

come, and swear that he said, I am able to build it; which is properly used of a house temple. Also, 2. The words were misunderstood; he spake of the temple of his body, John 2, 21. There have been, and still are such as wrest the sayings of Christ to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3, 16. But it was no capital crime, even by their own law. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me, Ps. 27, 12; and see Ps. 35, 11. He was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, let us remember we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

Jesus held his peace, not as self-condemned, or in confusion; but that Isa. 53, 7 might be fulfilled, and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spake evil against him, was as a deaf man that heard not, Ps. 38, 12—14. He was silent, because his hour was come. He was willing to submit to the sentence, otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as he had done many times before. When Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, Heb. 12, 24.

Since they could not accuse him, they try to make him accuse himself. Observe the question, Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? Whether thou pretend to be so? For they will by no means admit he really is so. Though the Messiah was to be the Consolation of Israel, yet so jealous were they of any thing that threatened their power, that they never would examine whether Jesus was the Messiah or not. They only wished him to confess that he called himself so, that they might treat him as a deceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to! The high priest had no regard to the living God, but took his name in vain.

Hitherto Jesus had seldom professed expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenour of his doctrine spoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make an open confession of it. That would have looked like disowning the truth he came into the world to bear witness to. It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment would give his enemies the advantage they desired. He thus confessed, for example and encouragement to his followers, to confess him before men, whatever hazard they ran.

It is impossible not to conclude that

the avowal of Jesus to be the Son of God, was understood by the highest legal and ecclesiastical authorities of his country, to involve the assertion of something belonging to his person, superhuman and Divine; or to be a constructive assumption by him of such dignity as belongs only to God.—(95.)

He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and to his whole estate of exaltation. The terrors of the judgment-day will be sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidelity. Having owned himself the Son of God, even now in his estate of humiliation, he speaks of himself as the Son of man, even in his estate of exaltation; for he had these two distinct natures in one person. The incarnation of Christ has made him Son of God and Son of man; for he is Immanuel, God with us. They should see him sitting on the right hand of power, according to the prophecy of the Messiah, Ps. 110. 1, which denotes both the dignity and the dominion he is exalted to. And coming in the clouds of heaven; this refers to Dan. 7. 13, applied to Christ, Luke 1. 33. He had spoken of this day to his disciples, for their comfort, Luke 21. 27, 28. Now he speaks of it to his enemies, for their terror; nothing is more comfortable to the righteous, or more terrible to the wicked, than Christ's judging the world at the last day.

The high-priest rent his clothes, according to the custom of the Jews, when they heard or saw any thing done or said which they looked upon to be a reproach to God. Caiaphas would be thought extremely tender of the glory of God. Observe, he owned that Jesus did profess himself the Son of God, and they called it blasphemy. Thus was the Lord of life condemned to die, that through him there may be no condemnation to us.

They all agreed with Caiaphas, and sentenced Jesus to death. The attendants then began to insult him. The scripture was fulfilled, Isa. 50. 6, He hid not his face from shame and spitting. It expressed the greatest contempt and indignation possible. Yet Christ when suffering for man submitted to it. That face which was fairer than the children of men, and which angels reverence, was thus abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that ours might not be filled with everlasting shame. They who now pro-

fane his blessed name, abuse his word, and hate his image on his sanctified ones, what do they better than spit in Christ's face?

They smote him with their hands. Now the scripture was fulfilled, Isa. 50. 6, and Lam. 3. 30, He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled with reproach, yet keepeth silence, ver. 28; and Mic. 5. 1, They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

Having first blindfolded Christ, they challenged him to tell who struck him. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be. They made sport with his prophetic office. This they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of. Those put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things.

Disdain, cruel mocking, and abhorrence, are the sure portion of the disciple from such as would buffet and deride the Lord of glory. Yet let us confess his name and bear the reproach, and he will confess us before his Father's throne.

56. It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment and a direction to compare it with the scriptures of the Old Testament, or whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why he submitted.

§ 133. Ver. 69-75. *Peter denies Christ.*

Peter's sin is impartially related, for the scriptures dealt faithfully. Bad company is an occasion of sin; those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, may expect to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter. They scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. While surrounded with terrors and dangers, and assaulted by Satan's temptations, he was challenged as a follower of Jesus, when dread of detection made him forget all his promises and resolutions.

They charged on him, Thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech shows him to be a disciple of Christ; by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus!

When charged as one of Christ's disciples, he was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him believe that he had no knowledge of Jesus. At first he pretended that he did not understand the charge. It is a fault to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn. It is a

greater fault to be shy of Christ; to dissemble our knowledge of him, when we are called to it, is, in effect, to deny him.

Upon the next attack, he said plainly, I know not the man, and with an oath. What, Peter, canst thou look upon yonder prisoner, and say thou dost not know him? Didst not thou quit all to follow him? Hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast thou forgotten the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look on him, and say thou dost not know him?

Upon the third assault, he began to anathematize himself as accursed of God, if he so much as knew the man. This was worst of all. We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother. Cursing and swearing prove a man no disciple of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies to take his name in vain.

This is written for warning to us; that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ, the Lord that bought us; by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him, and with his suffering people.

Peter's sin was aggravated; but on the other hand there is this to extenuate it, he fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design. Now observe what brought Peter to repentance. The cock crew; a common event; but, Christ mentioned the crowing of the cock in the warning he gave him. The word of Christ can put significance upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and make it beneficial to the souls of his people. Conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though overpowered by temptation, a little hint will serve, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path.

He remembered the words of the Lord. Serious reflection on the words of the Lord Jesus, will powerfully induce to re-

pentance, and help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more, than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus and tokens of his love.

He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might bemoan himself. Peter was thus left to fall, to give him deeper acquaintance with his own heart, to abate his self-confidence, and render him more modest, humble, and compassionate. The event has also proved most instructive to believers in various ways ever since, and if infidels, pharisees, and hypocrites will stumble at it or abuse it, it is at their peril.

Little do we know how we should act in very difficult situations, if we were left to ourselves. Who can say what he will; or what he will not do? The way of sin also is down-hill; every step makes way for another still more fatal. There is nothing to which we might not be tempted if left to ourselves. Let him therefore that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; let us all distrust our own hearts, and rely wholly on the Lord.

Peter wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep; sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy Divine justice, a sea of tears would not do that, but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is essential to repentance; to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin, for the future, the more loathsome. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often in the face of danger. True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but sincerely.

Let us think how soon Peter's repentance followed his sin, and how long ours has been deferred—how bitterly he wept, and what cause we have for so doing—how graciously he was received to favour again, and what a Saviour we have to wipe away our tears.—(71.)

68. We see here an instance of the advantage to be derived from comparing parallel passages of scripture. This requiring Christ to say who smote him, was when they had blindfolded him; see Mark and Luke. The adjuration of the high-priest, ver. 63, is omitted by those evangelists, but is important in connexion with our Lord's reply, who seems to have considered himself obliged to answer to it. This adjuration demanded a reply under the curse of the law, and the answer was considered as upon oath.

73. See note, Mark 14. 70.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

v. 1, 9, 11—14. M. 15. 1—5. L. 23. 1—5. J. 18. 28—38.  
v. 15—31. M. 15. 6—20. L. 23. 15—25. J. 18. 39—19. 3.  
v. 32—61. M. 15. 31—47. L. 23. 26—56. J. 19. 17—42.

§ 135, 139. Ver. 1—10. *Christ delivered to Pilate*  
—*The despair of Judas.*

Early in the morning another counsel was held, to consider what was to be done. They bound Jesus. He was bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he had soon broken these bonds. We were fettered with the bond of iniquity, held in the cords of our sins; but God had bound the yoke of our transgressions upon the Lord Jesus, Lam. 1. 14, that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are healed by his stripes.

They delivered him to Pontius Pilate; Christ had said, that he should be delivered to the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles were obnoxious to the judgment of God, and concluded under sin; Christ was to be the Saviour of Jews and Gentiles; therefore both took part in his death.

The money they paid to Judas for betraying Christ, was by him delivered back. Thus even this apostate was made to them a witness of Christ's innocence, and a monument of God's justice; which was glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and as a proof of his victory over Satan who had entered into Judas, and left them the more inexcusable. Whatever were his views when he betrayed his Lord, he saw his conduct in a very different light when Jesus was condemned. Then "he repented himself," but it was not the true repentance of humility, fear, faith, hope, love, godly sorrow, confession, and renouncing of all sin. His conscience was filled with horror and remorse, his heart with anguish and terror. He could not but feel the excellency and holiness of Jesus; the miracles he had witnessed, the wisdom and love of his gracious Lord must have rushed into his mind. Wicked men see little of the consequences of their crimes when they commit them, but must be answerable for them all.

Satan who had tempted Judas to presumption, now urged him to despair. He, in the fullest manner, acknowledged to the chief priests that he had sinned, and betrayed an innocent person. This was full testimony to the character of Christ, but the rulers were too hardened to be affected thereby; they declared that his opinion and conduct concerned them not, for they were determined to put Jesus to

death. This completed his despair; casting down the money he departed, and immediately went and hanged himself, not being able to endure the terror of Divine wrath, and the anguish of despair, which was anticipation of the pains of hell. There is little doubt but that the death of Judas was before that of our blessed Lord.

But was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had now condemned it to be shed unjustly? Is this nothing to them? Does it give no check to their violence, no warning to take heed what they do to this just man? Thus do fools make a mock at sin, as if no harm were done, no hazard run, by committing the greatest wickedness. Thus many make light of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas. It is folly for us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins we are any way accessory to, or partakers in. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison. They speak carelessly of the conviction, terror, and remorse that Judas was under. Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters.

We here see an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, particularly those who are given up to the love of money; and we have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18. Self-murder, though recommended by some heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

When the rulers had leisure, with hypocritical scrupulosity, they consulted what was to be done with the money Judas restored, and determined it was unlawful to put it into the treasury, having being the price paid for the blood of Jesus, and proving to be that of Judas also. To lay it out in some way which would appear charitable, they bought a small piece of ground which had been dug up for clay by a potter, that it might be used for the

burial of those of other nations who died at Jerusalem. It was no instance of humility that they would only bury strangers by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their own burying-places; and it shows the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, yet would possess the people with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple.

\* Many of the ancients apply this passage to signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting place is provided for them after death. And it perpetuates the infamy of those who bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called *Aceldama*—the field of blood, by the people; who noticed the acknowledgment of Judas that he had betrayed the innocent blood. This fulfilled a prophecy, Zech. 11. 12, and the anguish and remorse of Judas should impress our minds with some idea of what wicked men will feel hereafter. But while we are in this world there is hope, and the worst of sinners should be reminded of the danger from temptations to despair of God's mercy. When faith and hope are wanting, repentance cannot be genuine, and the enemy, who before suggested that their sins were small, will aggravate their guilt as unpardonable. Though he cannot destroy them himself, he has influence in urging them to plunge themselves beyond the reach of mercy.

Judas went far toward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money, which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

Many things belonging to true repentance may be found where that is yet wanting. Nothing will prove him truly penitent who is not humbled for all the sin of his heart and conduct; who relies not solely on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ; and who does not learn to hate sin, to love God, to submit to his will, and to walk in newness of life. Let none be satisfied with such partial convictions as a man may have, and yet remain full of pride, enmity, and rebellion.

1. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea during ten years, from A. D. 26 to A. D. 36. Complaints, having been made of his tyrannical conduct, especially of his cruelty towards the Samaritans, he was ordered to Rome to account for his proceedings. Tiberius died before he arrived, but it is said that he was banished to *Vienne* in Dauphiny, where he was reduced to extreme misery, and killed himself two years after.

5. See note, Acts 1. 18.

9. This prophecy is not found in Jeremiah, but one similar occurs, Zech. 11. 13. Various reasons have been assigned to explain this. It is most probable that St. Matthew wrote, "that which was spoken by the prophet," without naming any one in particular, as in a quotation from the same prophet, ch. 26. 31, and the word Jeremiah was added; being the first in that division of the bible as used by the Jews, any quotations from it would go under the name of that prophet. It is uncertain whether the burying ground was for foreign Jews, dying while in Jerusalem, or for Gentile foreigners.

§ 135, 137. Ver. 11—25. *Christ before Pilate.*

We have here an account of what passed in Pilate's judgment-hall. Jesus stood before the governor, as the prisoner before the judge. He stood unmoved in this judgment, that we might stand accepted in God's judgment.

The rulers did not at first accuse Jesus of having said that he was the Son of God, being aware that Pilate would not have regarded such a charge; but knowing how jealous the Romans were of authority, they accused him of advancing claims to the kingdom. Pilate dreaded no bad effects from such a king, the chief priests therefore were earnest in laying other things to his charge, but they only showed Pilate that they envied his reputation among the people.

Having no malice against Jesus, Pilate was desirous he should clear himself, and urged him to do it. He believed him to be innocent, and had heard perhaps that neverman spake like him; and he thought it strange that he had not one word to say for himself.

It had become a custom to pardon some condemned Jew, as an act of grace, to please the people, at the feast of the pass-over. Pilate supposed this would give him the occasion he desired of releasing Christ, and therefore named none but Jesus and Barabbas, concluding that as the latter had been guilty of robbery and murder, they would all prefer Jesus.

Pilate laboured to get Jesus discharged, because the chief priests had delivered him up for envy. He was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife, by way

of caution. She suffered many things in a dream; her thoughts troubled her, as Dan. 2. 1; 4. 5. The Father of spirits has many ways of access to the spirits of men, and can seal their instruction in a dream, or vision of the night, Job 33. 15. Yet to those who have the written word, God more ordinarily speaks by conscience, on a waking bed, than by dreams, when deep sleep falls upon men.

It was a warning to Pilate; Have nothing to do with him. God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our duty to hearken to them. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates! is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. It is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin; the nearer any are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more anxious we should be not to suffer sin to come, or remain upon them, Lev. 19. 17. The best friendship is friendship to the soul. By Pilate's proceeding against this just man it appears he did not regard it. Thus faithful admonitions are made light of, when given as warnings against sin.

The chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas, and to destroy Jesus; suggesting that this Jesus was a deceiver, in league with Satan, an enemy to their church and temple; that, if he were let alone, the Romans would come, and take away their place and nation. Being thus overruled by the priests, they made their choice. The cry for Barabbas was universal. This Peter charged upon them, Acts 3. 14, Ye desired a murderer to be granted you. Multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions.

Pilate, amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope it was rather from fondness for him than from enmity to Jesus; and therefore puts it to them, Shall I release Jesus likewise? No, they all said, Let him be crucified. Though those who cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons who had so lately cried Hosanna, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time. Such revolutions there are in

this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; that we may not be lifted up by honour, nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour.

The Jews were so bent upon the death of Christ, that Pilate concluded it would be dangerous to refuse. His government was very odious, and he was afraid to provoke them. And his struggle shows the power of conscience even on the worst men. The whole process more resembled the examination of a sacrifice, to prove it without blemish, than the trial of a criminal. Nor can a like case be found in the annals of mankind, for a person to be condemned to so dreadful a death, yet pronounced innocent and righteous by his betrayer, his judge, and even by the officer who attended his execution. All these circumstances were so ordered to make it evident that Christ suffered for no fault of his own, but for the sins of his people.

When Pilate had determined to yield to the desire of the Jews, he washed his hands before them. This was a custom of those times, and was his full testimony to the innocence of Christ. But how vain thus to expect to free himself from the guilt of the innocent blood of a righteous person, whom he was by his office bound to protect. The Jews were more hardened. While he feebly attempted to shift off the guilt, they, by a horrid imprecation, willingly took it upon themselves and their descendants. This imprecation has been awfully answered. At the siege of Jerusalem, the blood they now procured to be shed was avenged on them, even by the crucifying of so many, that wood could scarcely be found for their crosses.

We find correspondence between their crime and their punishment. They sold and bought Jesus as a slave, and they themselves were afterwards sold and bought as slaves at the lowest prices. They preferred a robber and murderer to Jesus, whom they crucified between two thieves, and they themselves were afterwards infested with bands of thieves and robbers. They put Jesus to death, lest the Romans should take away their place and nation; and the Romans did take away their place and nation. They crucified Jesus before the walls of Jerusalem; and before the walls of Jerusalem they were crucified in such numbers. Is it possible for any man to lay these things



together, and not to conclude the Jews' own imprecation to be remarkably fulfilled upon them?—(50.)

None could bear the sin of others, except Him that had no sin of his own to answer for; it is a bold undertaking, and too vast for any creature, to become bound for a sinner to Almighty God. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel their rejection of Christ to this day. From the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were made a by-word; yet on some of them, and some of theirs, this blood came, not to condemn, but to save them by Divine mercy.

Dreadful as was the conduct of the Jewish priests, and others concerned in the death of Christ, let us not imagine the Lord of glory would in effect meet with better usage, if he now appeared on earth as he did then, and should declare concerning his nominal disciples that their works were evil. Still would he be despised and rejected of men. Numbers would fear to own relation to him, and those whose hypocrisy and ignorance he exposed, would persecute him with unrelenting malice. Still there would be Pilates convinced of his innocence, but afraid to risk any thing in his cause. The unstable multitude would to-day cry, Hosanna, and to-morrow, Crucify him; still hardened scoffers would deride and revile him. Are we not all concerned? How often is Barabbas preferred to Jesus! Is not this so when sinners reject salvation that they may retain the darling sins, which rob God of his glory, and murder their souls.

But there is mercy in reserve for a remnant even of that nation. Let us then pray for them, that at length they may look to Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sins in true repentance, and with living faith. All who delight in curses and imprecations will find them rebound upon themselves. Let us then bless, and curse not; and in an opposite sense we may earnestly say, "Let the blood of the Lamb of God be on us and on our children, to cleanse us and them from all sin."

It is now upon us for good, through mercy, by the Jews' rejection of it. O let us flee to it! If we do not seek for healing in the blood of Christ, we join with the Jews in this curse:—(71.)

25. Thus the Jews absolved Pilate, and took

guilt upon themselves and their posterity by this most awful and general imprecation; so literally and dreadfully fulfilled ever since the Roman captivity, for 1700 years, unto the present day, as confessed by themselves.—*Hales*. He quotes David, Levi, and Maimonides. The righteousness of Jesus was established in the clearest manner, by his judges, Pilate and Herod; by the message of Pilate's wife; by the testimony of the traitor Judas; by that of the Roman centurion and guard, present at the crucifixion; and by his fellow-sufferer on the cross.

§ 138. Ver. 26—30. *Barabbas loosed; Christ mocked.*

Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal. This reminds us of the method of a sinner's salvation by the sufferings of Christ; while the conduct of the Jews, in preferring a vile murderer to the Lord of glory, describes the conduct of numbers, who spare their lusts, and reject the Saviour.

Jesus was scourged; this was cruel punishment, especially as inflicted by the Romans. The scripture was fulfilled, The ploughers ploughed on my back, Ps. 129. 3; I gave my back to the smiters, Isa. 50. 6; and, By his stripes we are healed, Isa. 53. 5. He was then delivered to be crucified; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the blood of his cross, Col. 1. 20. Crucifixion was a kind of death used only among the Romans, in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, on which the weight of the body hung, till the sufferer died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned; he answered the type of the brazen serpent raised on a pole.

Though Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, abused him. Perhaps not so much in spite to him, as to make sport for themselves; but it argues a base spirit to insult over those in misery, and to make the calamities of any one matter of sport and merriment. They put on him some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the scarlet robes which kings and emperors wore. This scorn of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when nothing but suffering and misery appeared in his countenance. They platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, ver. 29. This was to carry on the making him a mock king; but they designed it to be painful to him. They put a reed in his right hand; this was another of the insignia of majesty which they jeered him

with. They made a jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty. In this mock homage, instead of kissing him, they spat in his face. That blessed face, which outshines the sun, before which even the angels cover theirs, was thus polluted. They smote him on the crown of thorns, so struck them into his head, that they might wound it the deeper. Thus was he despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory. We may form some idea of this scene if we consider the ferocity, pride, and impiety of idolatrous Roman soldiers, allowed to give full scope to their savage disposition on the mild and holy Jesus.

§ 140. Ver. 31—34. *Christ led to be crucified.*

After they had mocked and abused Christ, they took the robe from him; but no mention is made of their taking off the crown of thorns. They led him away to be crucified; he was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, as a Sacrifice to the altar. They loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and led him away out of the city; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate, Heb. 13. 12. It seems, at first he carried the cross himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering. This was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they took the cross from him. He could not, with the cross on his back, go forward as they would have him; or they were afraid lest he should faint under the load, and prevent what their malice further intended to do; thus even the mercies of the wicked are really cruel. Taking the cross from him, they compelled one Simon to bear it. It was a reproach, none would do it but by compulsion.

But surely it was the greatest honour any man ever had. Make us ready, O Lord, to bear the cross thou hast appointed us, and daily to take it up with cheerfulness, following thee.—(83.)

They came to a place called Golgotha, probably the common place of execution. Here lay bones, the trophies of death's victory over many of the children of men. There they crucified Jesus, nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up, and him hanging on it. Let

our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and mourn. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with what manner of love he loved us.

As if death, so painful a death, were not enough, they added to its bitterness and terror in several ways. It was then usual to have a cup of bitter spiced wine for those to drink of who were to be put to death. Christ tasted thereof, and so had the worst of it; he let no bitter cup go by him untasted, when he was making atonement for man's sinful tasting of forbidden fruit. He would not drink it, because he would not have the best of it; would have nothing like an opiate, to lessen his sense of pain; he would die so as to feel himself die. He supported his complicated sufferings, in a manner equally distant from the ill-timed levity, or the sullen affectation of insensibility, which some have shown in the prospect of immediate death. All that has been admired in the death of heroes or philosophers, is no more comparable to the setting of this Sun of righteousness, than the glimmering taper to the clear light of day.

§ 141. Ver. 35—44. *Christ crucified.*

When they nailed Jesus to the cross, they stripped him of his garments. If we are stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip us of our clothes, but cannot strip us of our best comforts; cannot take from us the garments of praise. Four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they shared his garments. Whatever they designed, the word of God was herein accomplished. It is said, Ps. 22. 18, They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. This refers to Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spake.

They then sat down and watched him. Providence so ordered it, that those appointed to watch him, thereby became unexceptionable witnesses for him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them the noble confession, Truly this was the Son of God.

It was usual to put shame upon malefactors by a writing to notify the crime for which they suffered. So they set up over Christ's head, This is Jesus the King of the Jews. This they designed for his reproach,

but God so over-ruled it, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For here was no crime alleged against him. Nay, here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him, that he is Jesus the King of the Jews, the true Messiah and Saviour of the world.

There were crucified with him at the same time, two robbers upon the road, as the original signifies. Some think the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however this was, the scripture was fulfilled in it, Isa. 53. 12. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints, and have our lot among the chosen. As additional reproach, he was crucified between them, as if he had been the worst of the three.

To complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to show that when he was dying, he was bearing iniquity, he was then loaded with reproach. The common people, that passed by, reviled him. His extreme misery and exemplary patience under it, did not make them relent. The gesture they used, in contempt of him signified triumph in his fall, and insulting over him, Isa. 37. 22; Jer. 18. 16; Lam. 2. 15. This gesture was prophesied, Ps. 22. 7; 109. 25.

The taunts and jeers they uttered are here recorded. This was not the only time the enemies of Christ laboured to make others believe that of religion and of the people of God, which they themselves know to be false. They upbraided him with his saying that he was the Son of God; If thou be so, say they, come down from the cross; forgetting he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising the dead.

The chief priests and scribes, and the elders, mocked Jesus. They should have been in the temple at their devotions, for it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a holy convocation, Lev. 23. 7; but they were at the place of execution, reviling the Lord Jesus. They would insinuate, that, because he did not now save himself, all his power to save others was delusion, though the truth of his miracles was demonstrated beyond contradiction. They upbraided him with being the King of Israel. Many people could like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from

the cross; if they could have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him, for Christ and his cross are nailed together in this world. They challenged him to come down from the cross. What then had become of us, and the work of our redemption and salvation? But he did not fail, nor was he discouraged. To promise ourselves that we should believe, if we had such means and motives of faith as we ourselves might prescribe, when we do not improve what God has appointed, is not only a gross instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but a mere subterfuge of obstinate unbelief.

They suggest, that he did but deceive himself and others; for, if he had been the Son of God, he would not have been abandoned to all this misery! These very words David, in that famous prophecy of Christ, mentions, as spoken by his enemies, Ps. 22. 8, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him.

The thieves also who were crucified with him, joined with his persecutors. One of them did so, who said, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us, Luke 23. 39. The greatest mortifications of the body, and the most humbling rebukes of Providence, will not of themselves mortify the corruptions of the soul, nor suppress the wickedness of the wicked, without the grace of God.

Thus our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God, did it, not only by divesting himself of the honour due to him as the Son of God, but by submitting to the utmost indignity that could be done to the worst of men; because he was made sin for us, he was thus made a curse for us, and this may well make reproach easy to us, if at any time we suffer for righteousness' sake.

§ 141. Ver. 45-50. *The death of Christ.*

An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ, ch. 2. 2, and an extraordinary darkness notified his death, who is the Light of the world. But this darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. During the three hours this darkness continued, we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in silent retirement into his own soul, then in agony, wrestling with the powers

of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but against the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

About the ninth hour, when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict, Jesus cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* The words are related in the Syriac tongue, in which they were spoken, and show the perverse construction which his enemies put upon them, in understanding *Elias* for *Eli*, or *Eloi*.

He took this complaint from Ps. 22., 1. Hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spake of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other saying, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*, Christ repeated from David's psalms, though he could have expressed himself in his own words, to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct us in prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture expressions in prayer.

He uttered it with a loud voice; which speaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, and the earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Yet even this was connected with perfect faith, hope, love, and resignation; but what will be their misery who are for ever forsaken of God, and sink under his wrath in despair and enmity? The believer may have tasted some drops of the Saviour's cup, when he has for a time lost the comfort of communion with the God he loves, but he can only form a very feeble idea of the subject. Yet, thence he learns to judge of the Saviour's love to sinners; thence also he gets deeper conviction of the malignity of sin, and of his obligations to Christ, who hath delivered him from the wrath to come.

The complaint was, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The Father now loved him; nay, he knew that the Father loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep; and yet he was forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings also! Surely, never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint from One who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a terror to himself. Our Lord Jesus was, in his suf-

ferings, for a time forsaken by his Father. So he saith himself; not that the union between the Divine and human nature was in the least weakened; no, our blessed Lord was now by the eternal Spirit offering himself—nor as if there were any abatement of his Father's love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell. But his Father forsook him; he let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst; he withdrew from him all present comfortable sense of his complacency in him. When Christ's soul was first troubled, he had a voice from heaven to comfort him, John 12. 27, 28; when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him; but now God hid his face from him, and for a while withdrew his rod and staff in the darksome valley. Also he let out upon his soul an afflicting sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made sin for us, a curse for us; therefore, though God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as a Surety. These impressions he was pleased to admit, because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had done to all the rest, when it had been in his power to avoid it. Christ's being forsaken of his Father, was the most grievous of his sufferings, that which he complained most of. Our Lord Jesus, even when thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God; this he resolves to keep fast hold of, calling upon him, "*My God.*"

His enemies impiously ridiculed this complaint; they said, *This man calleth for Elias.* Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God and the people of God, rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. It was the wilful mistake of some of the Jews, who misrepresented Jesus as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures.

About the same time Christ also said, *I thirst; being parched by pain and suffering.* A vessel stood by with vinegar, which, mixed with water, was a common drink of Roman soldiers, one filled a sponge and reached it to him that he

might drink, while the rest bade them let him go, that it might be seen whether ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> would come to rescue him, which seems to have been spoken in derision. ~~It is no new thing~~ for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers.

Between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, Jesus was nailed to the cross; and soon after the ninth hour, that is between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he died. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed; and Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour.

He cried with a loud voice, as before. This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was whole in him, and nature strong. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and scarcely heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spake in his full strength, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered into his Father's hands. He had strength to bid defiance to the powers of death; but to show that by the eternal Spirit he offered himself, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he cried with a loud voice. His crying with a loud voice when he died, perhaps signified that his death should be published to all the world, all mankind being concerned in it.

Then he yielded up the ghost. The Son of God upon the cross, did truly and properly die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His soul was separated from his body, and so his body was left really and truly dead. It was certain that he did die, for it was requisite that he should die. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, Thou shalt surely die, the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise there is no remission, Heb. 9. 15. He had undertaken to make his soul an offering for sin, and he did it when he voluntarily resigned it.

50. "He dismissed the spirit." He himself willingly gave up that life which it was impossible for man to take away. In no case is this expression used of any person except Christ.—*A. Clarke.*

§ 142. Ver. 51—56. *Events at the crucifixion of Christ.*

It was requisite that Christ's humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the Divine glory. Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain. Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and might themselves be eye-witnesses, the veil of the temple was rent by an invisible power; that veil which parted between the holy place and the most holy. Death is the rending of the veil of flesh which interposes between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true christians is so. It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. Now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled. Thus we all with open face behold the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation. It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people. It signified the consecrating and laying open a new and living way to God. The veil kept even the priests from drawing near the most holy place, where the Shechinah was. But the rending of it signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God, 1. For himself. This was the great day of atonement, when our Lord Jesus, as the great High Priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place, in token of which the veil was rent, Heb. 9. 7, &c. 2. For us in him: so the apostle applies it, Heb. 10. 19, 20. He died, to bring us to God, and, in order thereunto, to rend that veil of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him. We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, Heb. 4. 16; 6. 19, 20. The rending of the veil signified, that when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the veil is rent.

The earth did quake. This signified the horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore testimony to the innocence of him that was persecuted, and

against the impiety of those that persecuted him. It also signified the fatal blow now given to the devil's kingdom.

The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. When we consider Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts must be rent—the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock that will not yield; that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

The graves were opened. It should seem, the same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. They awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. To whom they appeared, in what manner, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us; we must not covet to be wise above what is written. The relating this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation that we must not look thereto, for a confirmation of our faith; we have a more sure word of prophecy. See Luke 16. 31. Yet we may learn from it that even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; that Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled death; and that, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, rise again. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. They go into the holy city, become citizens of it, have their conversation in it, and appear to many, and as persons not of this world.

The centurion and those with him, watching Jesus, were soldiers, whose profession is commonly hardening. They were Gentiles, who knew not the scriptures now fulfilled; yet they only were convinced! A sad presage of the blindness that should happen to Israel, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes. They were persecutors of Christ, and but just before had reviled him, as appears Luke 23. 36. How soon can God, by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language!

They were greatly alarmed at what they saw and heard, lest the Divine judgments should overtake them for their cruelty to so extraordinary a Person. The dreadful appearances of God in his providence, sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

This conviction was expressed in the terror that was struck upon them. God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them know themselves to be but men. Also in the testimony extorted from them; they said, Truly this was the Son of God. It was the great matter now in dispute. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it. The Jews, now he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as determined against him. Yet now this centurion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, Truly this was the Son of God. Great is the truth, and it will prevail.

We may reflect with comfort on the abundant testimonies given to the character of Jesus; and exercising ourselves to have a conscience void of offence, we may leave it to the Lord to vindicate our characters, if we live to Him.

Here were a company of women who boldly adhered to Christ, when the rest of his disciples had basely deserted him. Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. Of these women it is said, that they had followed Jesus from Galilee. Our former services and sufferings for Christ, should be an argument with us to persevere faithfully to the end in attendance on him. They had ministered to him of their substance. How gladly would they have ministered to him, now, if they might have been admitted! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to follow him. When restrained from doing what we would, we must do

we can, in the service of Christ. So and them are particularly named, for Gerson, honour those that honour Christ. is come,

They stood afar off. Whether from own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his lovers and friends stood aloof, Ps. 38. 11; Job 19. 13. When debarred from doing any other office of love, they looked a look of love toward him. It was a sorrowful look; they looked unto him who was now pierced;

and mourned, and were in bitterness for him. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But it was no more than a look; they beheld him, but they could not help him. When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers-on.

How must adoring angels have been filled with astonishment, when they witnessed their incarnate Lord and Creator thus despised and treated by sinful men! But thus were the purposes and prophecies of God accomplished; thus was his law magnified, his justice satisfied, and his holiness displayed. Thus was the way opened for sinners to the throne of grace now, and to the kingdom of glory hereafter. Yet never were the horrid nature and effects of sin so tremendously displayed, as on that important day when the beloved Son of the Father hung upon the cross, suffering for sin, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

Let us, as near as we can, contemplate this affecting scene, that our hearts may be melted with godly sorrow, weaned from this world, encouraged in hope, animated by love and gratitude, made to glory in the cross of Christ alone, and thus be induced to yield ourselves willingly to his service.

51. This veil of the temple separated the holy of holies from the holy place. It was of wool, richly embroidered, sixty feet in length, and more than a foot in thickness, nor could it have been rent by the earthquake. Of the earthquake sufficient traces may be observed in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, which literally show that the rocks have been "rent."

53. Bloomfield considers that the saints here mentioned could not have been long dead, or they would not be recognised by their contemporaries. Also that they were raised to show that the power of the grave was destroyed, by life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel, and thus an emblem was given of the general resurrection. He considers that their rising again was affected at once.

The soldiers must have known that Jesus he considered by many to be the Messiah; and for the exclamation, acknowledging him to be the God, was doubtless produced by the awful and singular circumstances they witnessed.

Ver. 57—61. *The burial of Christ.*

Heb. Jesus Christ was buried. When his soul was gone to paradise, his body was deposited in the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonah, and fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah; He made his grave with the wicked. Thus in all things he must be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and, like us, he must return

unto the dust. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till well assured that he was really dead.

The apostles were all fled, and none of them appeared to show the respect to their Master which the disciples of John showed to him after he was beheaded, ch. 14. 12. Then did God stir up Joseph of Arimathea instead; for whatever work God has to do, he will find instruments to do it. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, but here was one that was a rich man, ready to be employed in a service which required a man of some property. Worldly wealth, in some services to be done for Christ, is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if they have a heart to use it for God's glory. He believed in Christ, though he did not openly profess it. We should adore the mysteries of Divine wisdom, in fitting men for particular services, and the sovereign power of Divine grace, which sometimes gives courage to the fearful, when the intrepid are afraid. Thus God provides for the honour of his name, and the support of his cause, and defeats the purposes of the most powerful adversaries. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant, honour was done to Christ, and testimony borne to his integrity. This common act of humanity, if done after a godly sort, may be made an acceptable part of Christianity.

Here was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb. Christ was laid in a borrowed tomb: as he had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body when he was dead. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a borrowed grave. The Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God over-ruled it, so that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa. 53. 9.

He was laid in a new tomb, which Joseph, it is likely, designed for himself, hewn out of a rock. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a

solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had secret access. A great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, as they had attended Jesus to the cross, so they followed his body to the grave. As if they would compose themselves to sorrow, they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. True love to Christ will carry us through, even to the utmost, in following him.

The use and profit which may be made of Christ's burial is two-fold. 1. It works in us the burial of all our sins. As Christ, by the power of his Godhead, when dead and buried, overcame the grave and the power of death in his own person, so, by means of his spiritual union, he worketh in the members of his mystical body a spiritual death and burial of sin and natural corruption. And let a man that is dead in sin, but touch by faith Christ dead and buried, and by virtue of Christ's death and burial he shall be raised from sin to become a new man, as the dead man that touched the body of Elisha, 2 Kings 13, 21. 2. The burial of Christ serves as a sweet perfume to all our graves; by his burial, Christ hath, as it were, consecrated and perfumed all our graves, and, instead of houses of perdition, hath made them places of rest and sleep. Therefore, although to the eye of man the beholding a funeral may cause terror, yet if we would remember how Christ by his burial hath changed the nature of the grave, it should make us to rejoice. And let us ever remember, that we are ever to imitate Christ's burial in being continually occupied in the spiritual burial of our sins.—(56.)

60. A new tomb: this prevented any cavil as to some other body having been raised, or that the body of Christ was raised by touching the bones of a prophet, as in the case of Elisha. We read, Isa. 53, 9, He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. The word for wicked is in the *dual* number, rich in the singular. Thus it may be rendered, His death shall be with two criminals, and with one rich man. See Doddridge.

§ 143. Ver. 62-66. *The sepulchre secured.*

On the Jewish sabbath, the chief priests and pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and

so adding rebellion to their sin. Their petition sets forth, that that deceiver (so they call him who is Truth itself!) had said, After three days I will rise again. His disciples remembered those very words for the confirmation of their faith, but his persecutors remember them for the provocation of their rage and malice. Thus the same word of Christ to the one was a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. It further set forth their jealousy. That which they really feared, was, his resurrection; that which is most Christ's honour and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, still are in fear of losing it again. The chief priests apprehended that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection should be once preached and believed, the last error would be worse than the first. Those that oppose Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably embarrassed, their errors becoming worse and worse, the last worst of all, Ps. 2, 4, 5.

Observe, as his friends had been permitted to bury him, they desired Pilate to order the sepulchre to be secured till the third day was ended, lest his disciples should steal his body, report that he was risen, and thus induce the people to a fatal error. It was indeed very unlikely that the terrified disciples, who could expect no better usage than their Master, should have either courage or inclination for such an imposture, had they been wicked enough to attempt it. But this was permitted that there might be indisputable demonstration of our Lord's resurrection. Pilate told them they might secure the sepulchre as carefully as they could. Accordingly they placed a strong guard, affixing their seal to the stone that closed the sepulchre, that there might be no collusion, and they were satisfied that all needful precautions were taken.

Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain! when his hour was come, death, and all those sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples, was folly, because needless; but to think to guard it against the power of God, was folly, because fruitless and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had dealt wisely!



Here also we have a repeated instance of God's taking the wise in their own craftiness. The seal and the guard served only more fully to attest the truth of Christ's resurrection. Thus shall all the rage and the artifices of Christ's enemies at length promote the purposes of his glory. The wrath of man, O Lord, shall praise thee, and the remainder of it thou shalt restrain, Ps. 76. 10.—(80.)

62. The preparation. The word signifies the day preceding any sabbath or festival, as the preparation was then made for its celebration. Had our Lord's body not been begged by Joseph, it would probably have been buried with those of the criminals. Had it been given to his immediate followers, they probably would have kept it unburied, while they made preparations for the interment. Thus all events are over-ruled to accomplish the Divine purposes.

63. The mode of enumerating time among the Jews usually, included any part of a day as a day; thus the time of Christ's resurrection from the grave is sometimes spoken of as after three days, sometimes, on the third day, which is the period meant.

66. In addition to these precautions, we should remember that it was then the full of the moon, and the city was full of strangers, many of whom probably passed the night in the open air.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

V. 1-8. M. 16. 1-8. L. 24. 1-11. J. 20. 1, 2.  
V. 9, 10. M. 16. 9-11. J. 20. 18.

§ 145, 144. Ver. 1-8. *Christ's resurrection.*

God accomplishes his promises by methods beyond the expectations of his people. Let us with joy contemplate the Saviour bursting the barriers of the grave, and triumphing over the king of terrors in his resurrection. Thus he proved himself to be the Son of God and the King of Israel; he manifested the sufficiency and acceptance of his atoning sacrifice; and he became the first fruits from the dead, the Author of spiritual and eternal life to his people. Vain were the precautions of the Jewish rulers. The stone, the seal, the guard of soldiers only served to render the event beyond dispute.

Christ rose the third day after his death; that was the time he had often prefixed. He lay so long, to show that he was really and truly dead; no longer, that he might not see corruption.

He rose upon the first day of the week. On the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness. On this day did He who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and the

seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it rose again in the first-day sabbath, called the Lord's day, Rev. 1. 10; and this is from henceforward often mentioned in the New Testament as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the perfecting of the work of creation, Gen. 2. 1-3. Man by his revolt made a breach upon that perfect work, which never was entirely repaired till Christ rose from the dead; and the day on which this was done, was justly blessed and sanctified, and the seventh day from that. He who on that day rose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now are anew created.

He rose as soon as it could be said that the third day was come; when the day began to dawn, then the day-spring from on high again visited us, Luke 1. 78. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, Early will I seek thee.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the sepulchre, they sat over against the sepulchre, as before they sat over against the cross; still they studied to express their love to Christ, still they were inquiring after him. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the saints, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ; death and the grave cannot slacken the bond of love between them.

There was a great earthquake. This as it were loosed the bond of death, and shook off the fetters of the grave, and introduced "the Desire of all nations," Hag. 2. 6, 7. Those that are sanctified, and thereby raised to a spiritual life, while it is in the doing, find an earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who trembled and was astonished.

The angel of the Lord descended from heaven. The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus, at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony; but upon the cross, when his Father forsook him, the angels withdrew from him; now that he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, now, behold, the angels of God worship him.

Our Lord Jesus could have rolled back the stone by his own power, but he chose

to have it done by an angel. The angel's sitting upon the stone when he had rolled it away, speaks a secure triumph over all that was in the way of Christ's resurrection. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. The whiteness of his raiment was an emblem, not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. The keepers were soldiers, hardened against fear, yet only the sight of an angel struck them with terror. The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. This angel encouraged the women against their fears. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid. Fear not ye, for his resurrection will be your consolation. Where will the wicked appear, when the same power shall raise the dead, destroy the visible creation, and be displayed to judge the world? But those that in faith and love seek Jesus, who was crucified, that they may be saved through his precious blood, and are employed in his service and to the glory of his name, need fear none of these things. If they seek him diligently, they shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder. All our believing inquiries after the Lord Jesus are noticed in heaven, and certainly answered. The angel mentions his being crucified. True believers love and seek Christ, not only though he was crucified, but because he was so.

To be told, He is not here, would have been no welcome news, if it had not been added, He is risen. In all our inquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is risen; and we must seek him as one risen, and not with gross, carnal thoughts of him. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a glorified body. Our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, Rom. 10. 6—8. We must seek him with reverence and humility, and awful regard to his glory, for he is risen. When we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen, therefore let our hearts rise, and seek the things that are above, Col. 3. 1—3.

The angel refers to the word now fulfilled; He is risen, as he said. Let us never think that strange of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations; whether the sufferings of this present time, or the glory that is to be revealed. If we remember what Christ hath

said to us, we shall be the less surprised at what he doeth with us.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay. You see that he is not here, and remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that he is risen. It may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he has there left of his love in condescending so low for us. When we look into the grave where we expect we must lie, to take off the terror of it, let us look into the grave, the place where our Lord lay. While disciples behold the place where the Lord lay, they become reconciled to thoughts of death and the grave, are inspired with hopes of a glorious resurrection, and with joyful expectation that when he shall appear, they will also appear with him in glory.

Go quickly. It was good to be there, but they have other work appointed them. They must go tell the disciples. Public usefulness must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves. Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted; that they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions, and that they may inquire further into it themselves.

This was a recompense for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him. They were bid to go quickly. We must always be ready and forward to obey the commands of God, Ps. 119. 60, to do good to our brethren, to carry comfort to them, as feeling for their afflictions.

They were directed to appoint the disciples to meet Christ in Galilee. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in Galilee, but he would have that one to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit there. The exaltation of Christ does not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to those who are at a distance from the plenty of the means of grace he will graciously manifest himself. As an angel of God expressly told them these things, they were not to doubt the truth of them, how extraordinary soever they might appear, nor to neglect reporting them for fear of being deemed visionaries.

Observe, the women departed with fear and great joy. It is said of their joy, It

was great joy; it is not said so of their fear. Holy fear has joy attending it. Those who serve the Lord with reverence, serve him with gladness. Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling. Only perfect love and joy will cast out all fear.

The fear and the joy together quickened their pace. Those that are sent on God's errand, must not loiter; where the heart is enlarged with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will run the way of God's commandments. The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with Heaven; should tell others what God has done for their souls.

§ 148. Ver. 9, 10. *Christ appears to the women.*

Here is Christ's surprising appearance to the women: As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them. God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected; but Christ was nigh them, and still in the word is nigh us. The salutation speaks the good-will of Christ to us, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. The Greek word signifies, Rejoice ye. It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful, joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes abundant matter for joy.

They expressed the reverence and honour they had for him; they adored and worshipped him with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted. They held him, and would not let him go. Now that they had this further assurance of his resurrection, they joyfully welcomed it. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ as offered us in the gospel; with reverence cast ourselves at his feet, by faith take hold of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

We do not find that they said any thing to Christ; their affectionate adorations spake plainly enough. What he said to them was no more than what the angel had said; for he will confirm the word of his messengers, Isa. 44. 26; and his way of comforting his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts; the same that they have heard before from his angels, the ministers.

He rebukes their fear; Be not afraid. Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that

to silence them. Observe, he repeats the message; Go, tell my brethren, that they in Galilee shall see me. If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that appoints the meeting. But especially observe here, that he calls his disciples his brethren. Not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren, yet he never addressed them as such till after his resurrection. They had just before shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive, and to teach us to do so, he calls them brethren. Being all his brethren, they were brethren one to another and must love as brethren. Notwithstanding his majesty and purity, and our meanness and unworthiness, he condescends to call us his brethren!

§ 149. Ver. 11—15. *Confession of the soldiers.*

The Roman soldiers seem to have been the first that gave intimation of the resurrection of Jesus. Probably some of them rumoured what had passed, while the leaders made their report to the chief priests. The latter must have been convinced that the events were miraculous, but they had engaged all their credit and authority in the contest, and they would not think of submitting; the only way left was to attempt to conceal what had passed. They had put Jesus to death, and there was no way of standing to what they had done, but by stifling the evidence of his resurrection. Thus those who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of adding iniquity to iniquity, which is part of the curse of Christ's persecutors, Ps. 69. 27. They bribed the soldiers to report that the disciples had stolen the body while they slept, and undertook to secure them from punishment. What wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money! Here was large money given for the advancing of that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see bad ones so liberally supported. The priests undertook to secure the sword of Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. Those

promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

But this falsehood confuted itself. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, they would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole shows that the story was entirely false. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dispirited men, should expose themselves for the rescue of a dead body. Why were not means used to discover the dead body? But malice against the truth will resort to any means to propagate error, and infidels will swallow the most absurd falsehoods. We must not impute such things to the weakness of their understandings, but ascribe them to the wickedness of their hearts. God leaves them to expose their own course, and give a constrained testimony to the truth.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers; and yet they took bribes to belie him, and hinder others from believing in him. The plainest evidence will not influence men, without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Those willing to be deceived propagated the false story. To this purport was the narrative, which, as Justin Martyr relates, the great sanhedrim sent to the Jews of the dispersion concerning this, exciting them to vigorous resistance against christianity.

But there is something more to be understood and considered in the resurrection of Christ, besides its being a Divine attestation to his person, office, and character, as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. For as his death was our death, so that all his members suffered with him upon the cross, and there and then paid the debt of sin in and with him; so his resurrection is their resurrection, all believers being raised together and quickened in him; he with them, and they in him, rising again, and sitting together in heavenly places, where they now are in virtue of his right and title, and whither they must follow him at the time ap-

pointed, in their own persons, as the harvest of which he is the first fruits. These are the expressions of scripture, and St. Paul directs to the meaning and full import of them, when he says that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. 15. 22: see also Eph. 1. 20; 2. 5, 6; Col. 1. 18; 3. 1, 3.—(71.)

§ 153, 154. Ver. 16—20. *Christ's commission to his disciples.*

This evangelist passes over other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to that which was the most solemn, being appointed before his death, and after his resurrection.

He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, 1 Cor. 15. 6. They worshipped him; they gave Divine honour to him, signified by outward expressions of adoration. All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith, will worship him. But some doubted; even among those that worship some doubt. The faith of the sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. But Christ gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as made their faith to triumph over doubts. He informed them that he was invested with all power and authority in heaven and earth; regulating the course of providence, and communicating all spiritual blessings as Mediator. He now solemnly commissioned the apostles and his ministers to go forth among all nations. The apostles were still so much under the influence of Jewish prejudices, that they did not understand this as authorizing them to preach to the Gentiles, or to admit any into the church unless first proselyted to Judaism, till a considerable time after the descent of the Holy Ghost. But this word brake down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to all nations. Salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded who do not, by their unbelief and impenitence, shut themselves out. The salvation they were to preach, is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit; there is no difference in Christ Jesus.

The general nature of baptism has been noticed, ch. 3; we have here that institution appropriated to the christian dispensation. The apostles were ordered to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Ghost. This is undeniable proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; of the Godhead of the Son, and of the distinct personality and Godhead of the Holy Ghost. To be baptized in their name implies professed dependence on those Persons jointly and equally, and devoting ourselves to them. This cannot be accounted for, on any other principles, than the mysterious unity of three coequal Persons in the unity of the Godhead.

Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the person and atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and in consequence gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of the triune Jehovah in all his ordinances and commandments. Baptism is an outward sign of that inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer's justification. When our Lord had appointed this ordinance, and directed the apostles to teach their future converts to observe all things whatever he had commanded them, he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Had he said to death, or to eternity, that might have restricted it to the persons of the apostles, but to the end of the world, includes all succeeding ministers and disciples, in every age and nation, till the consummation of all things. Being compassed with such numerous witnesses of our Redeemer's resurrection, let us be ever ready to meet him in all his ordinances appointed for the fuller establishment of our faith and hope. Let us examine ourselves whether we really possess the inward and spiritual grace of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, by which those who were the children of wrath become the children of God.

The duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers is, to teach the commands of Christ, to expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach them, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of them Christians must be trained up. His bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assures them of his spiritual presence; "I

am with you;" that is, My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall abide with you. John 16. 7. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, and he seasonably promises them his presence. It was unlikely that they should turn the stream of long usage; that they should establish a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a crucified Jesus; but, Lo, I am with you; and therefore you shall gain your point.

They shall have his constant presence, always—all days, every day. There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they were undone. He assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are, the word of Christ is nigh us, even in our mouth, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even in our hearts. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, Isa. 45. 15, but never a God that absenteth himself; never at a distance.

There is a world before us, that will never end, but this world is hastening to its period; yet till then the Christian religion shall be kept up, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. He is with us in his protecting providence, by the influences of his teaching, sanctifying, and comforting Spirit, in communicating every blessing, we should ever contemplate him as with us, in secret and social worship, and in our public assemblies.

To this precious assurance Amen is affixed. It speaks Christ's confirmation of this promise, Lo, I am with you. It is his Amen, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. "Verily I am, and will be with you; I the Amen, the faithful witness, do assure you of it." It speaks the church's concurrence in the desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist's Amen—So be it, blessed Lord. Our Amen to Christ's promises turns them into prayers. Lord, remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope. Let this lead us to turn the promise into a prayer for ourselves, and for every part of the church. Even so, Lord Jesus, be thou with us and all thy people, cause thy face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

THERE is no evidence sufficiently strong to prove that the evangelist Mark was an apostle or companion of Christ during his ministry, but some of the fathers consider that he was one of the seventy disciples. From Col. 4. 10, we conclude that he was sister's son to Barnabas, and from Acts 12. 12, that he was the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem, at whose house the apostles and first christians assembled. His Hebrew name was John, and it is supposed he took the name of Mark when he went to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. From Peter's styling him his son, 1 Pet. 5. 13, the evangelist is supposed to have been converted by that apostle, and on his deliverance, recorded Acts 12. 12, Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas; but declining to attend them through their whole progress, he returned to Jerusalem, to Peter and the other apostles. We afterwards find Mark at Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, and willing to accompany them. Acts 15. 37-38, shows that a contention arising respecting him, he proceeded with Barnabas to Cyprus. Afterwards, he went with Timothy to Rome, at the express desire of Paul, during his imprisonment. He, probably, then went to Asia, and returned to Rome with Peter, where he is thought to have written and published his gospel. To these notices gathered from the New Testament, other writers add, that Mark afterwards went to Egypt, and having planted a church at Alexandria, died and was buried there. Jerome's expressions imply that he died a natural death.

The above particulars are important, as they show how intimately Mark was connected with the immediate followers of our Lord, if he was not himself one of the number; nor is it any diminution to the validity and value of his gospel that he was not one of the apostles. The testimony of all the early christian writers is unanimous to his being the author of the gospel which bears his name: The time when it was composed is uncertain, various dates have been assigned between A. D. 56 and 65, but from 60 to 63 seems the most probable. It is allowed by all ancient writers that Mark wrote at Rome, some supposing that Peter dictated to him, though the general testimony is, that the apostle having preached at Rome, Mark, who was the apostle's companion, and had a clear understanding of what Peter had delivered, was desired to commit the particulars to writing; thus the striking coincidences between this gospel and that by Matthew, himself also an apostle and companion of our Lord, are easily explained. And we may remark, that the great humility of Peter is very conspicuous where any thing is related concerning him. His weaknesses and fail are fully exposed, while things which are to his honour are hardly touched upon. Scarcely an action or a work concerning Christ is mentioned at which this apostle was not present, and the minuteness of the circumstances detailed show that they were related by an eyewitness.

The Hebrew expressions in this gospel prove that the author was a Jew, while the Latinisms show that the writer had lived among the Romans. The explanations occasionally given, show that it was written for Gentile converts, (as 7. 2, 11, &c.) and the particulars concerning Christ's birth and early life, which would be most interesting to Jews, are omitted. All ancient writers agree it was written in the Greek language. The genuineness of the gospel according to St. Mark stands upon critical ground so peculiarly strong, that it has not been contested by the most cavilling objectors.

The characteristics of Mark's gospel are simplicity and conciseness. It records more of the miracles than of the discourses of our Lord, and though in many things it coincides with the gospel according to St. Matthew, we are not to deem it a repetition, but may reap advantages from reviewing the same important and interesting events, placed by each of the evangelists in that point of view which most affected his own mind. And on the other hand, it is no objection to the evangelist or his writings, that it was not a part of his design to include the early life of Christ. (33. 69. 70. 77. 95.)

## CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1-8.	M. 3.1-12.	L. 3.1-17.
Ver. 9-13.	{ M. 3.13-17.	{ L. 3.21, 22.
	{ M. 4.1.	{ L. 4.1, 2.
Ver. 14, 15.	M. 4.12-17.	L. 4.14.
Ver. 16-20.	M. 4.18-22.	L. 5.1-11.
Ver. 21-28.		L. 4.31-37.
Ver. 29-39.	* M. 8.14-17.	L. 4.38-44.
Ver. 40-45.	M. 8.2-4.	L. 5.12-16.

§ 15. Ver. 1-8. *The office of John the Baptist.*

The New Testament is the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is gospel; it is God's word, and is faithful and true, see Rev. 19. 9; 21. 5; 22. 6. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour, the Messiah promised and ex-

pected. This Jesus is the Son of God. That truth is the foundation on which the gospel is built, and which it is written to demonstrate; for if Jesus be not the Son of God, our faith is vain.

Observe the reference of the New Testament to the Old. The gospel of Jesus Christ begins, and we shall find it goes on, just as it is written in the prophets; for the exact harmony that there is between both the Old Testament and the New, proves that they both have the same Divine original.

Quotations are here taken from Isaiah and Malachi, each of whom spake to the

same purport concerning the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the ministry of John. Malachi spake very plainly, ch. 3. 1, concerning John Baptist, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Christ himself applied this to John, Matt. 11. 10, who was God's messenger, sent to prepare Christ's way.

Isaiah begins the evangelical part of his prophecy with this, which points to the beginning of the gospel of Christ, Isa. 40. 3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness. From these prophets we may observe, 1. That Christ, in his gospel, comes among us, bringing with him a treasure of grace, and a sceptre of government. 2. Such is the corruption of the world, that there is opposition to his progress to remove. 3. When God sent his Son into the world, he took care, and when he sends him into the heart, he takes care, effectual care, to prepare his way before him; for the designs of his grace shall not be frustrated. 4. When the paths that were crooked, are made straight, the mistakes of the judgment, and the crooked ways of the affections rectified, then way is made for Christ's comforts. 5. It is in a wilderness, for such this world is, that Christ's way is prepared, and theirs that follow him, like that through which Israel passed to Canaan. 6. The messengers of conviction that come to prepare Christ's way, are God's messengers, and must be received as such. 7. Those sent to prepare the way of the Lord, in such a wilderness, have need to cry aloud, and not spare.

In John's preaching and baptizing there was the beginning of the gospel-doctrines and ordinances, and the first fruits of them. He preached the remission of sins, which is the great gospel-privilege; showed people their need of it, and that it might be obtained. He preached repentance; he told people that they must forsake their sins, and turn to God. Repentance for the remission of sins, was what the apostles were commissioned to preach to all nations, Luke 24. 47. He preached Christ, and directed his hearers to expect him speedily to appear; and to expect great things from him. Like a true gospel minister, he preaches the great pre-eminence Christ is advanced to. John, though one of the greatest that was born of woman, thinks himself unworthy to be employed in the meanest office about Christ. The most eminent saints have

always been the most humble. They have had the most abasing thoughts of themselves, and the most exalted views of the glory and excellency of Christ. They feel their need of his atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit more than others; and have deemed the meanest place in his service too high and honourable for them. They will speak humbly of themselves, and honourably of Christ, in proportion to their spiritual discernment and advance in the Divine life. Also, the great power Christ is invested with; He comes after me in time, but he is mightier than I, for he is able to baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit of God, and by him govern the spirits of men. The great promise Christ makes in his gospel to those who have repented, and have had their sins forgiven them, is, they shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, shall be purified by his graces, and refreshed by his comforts.

We speak not here of the nature of baptism, the combining of preaching with it, their aspect to each other, and concurrence to one excellent end; the word unfolding the sacrament and the sacrament sealing the word. The word, as a light, informing and clearing the sense of the seal, and it again, as a seal, confirming and ratifying the truth of the word. But truly the word is a light, and the sacraments have in them of the same light illuminating them. And this of baptism, the ancients particularly express by light; yet both are but darkness to us till the same light shine in our hearts, for till then we are nothing but darkness ourselves. We use these ordinances, word, and sacraments without profit and comfort for the most part, because we have not of that Divine light within us; and we have it not because we ask it not, for we have his word that cannot fail, that our heavenly Father will give even his choice gift, this light, his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. Then would the word and sacrament be sweet to us which now are so lifeless and unsavoury.—(88.)

In the success of John's preaching, and the disciples he admitted by baptism, there was the beginning of a gospel church. There went out unto him inhabitants both of city and country, families of them, who were baptized of him. They entered themselves his disciples, and bound themselves to his discipline; in token of which, they confessed their sins; he admitted

them his disciples, in token of which, he baptized them.

7. Or the fastening of the sandals. Sandals were used instead of shoes in ancient times. They were pieces of leather underneath the foot, and fastened by straps, here called latchets. To unloose them was considered a menial office.

§ 16, 17. Ver. 9—13. *The baptism and temptation of Christ.*

We have here a brief account of Christ's baptism and temptation. His baptism was his first public appearance, after he had long lived obscurely in Nazareth. How much hidden worth is there, which in this world is lost in the dust of contempt and cannot be known, or wrapt up in the veil of humility and will not be known. But sooner or later it shall be known; as Christ was.

He took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh: in that, though he was perfectly pure and unspotted, yet he was washed as if he had been polluted; and thus, for our sakes, he sanctified himself, that we also might be sanctified, and be baptized with him, John 17. 19. See how honourably God owned him, when he submitted to John's baptism.

He saw the heavens opened; thus he was owned to be the Lord from heaven, and had a glimpse of the glory and joy set before him, and secured to him. Many have the heavens opened to receive them, but they do not see it; Christ had not only a clear foresight of his sufferings, but of his glory too.

He saw the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. We may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit descending and working upon us. God's good work in us is sure evidence of his good will towards us, and preparations for us.

Let us trace the workings of this Spirit in Jesus, not only as a Spirit of miraculous power, but of the richest grace and holiness, earnestly praying that this unction, from Christ our Head, may descend upon our souls.—(80.)

He heard a voice, which was encouragement to proceed in his undertaking; Thou art my beloved Son. God loved him not the less for that low and mean estate to which he had humbled himself. He loved him much the more for that glorious and kind undertaking, in which he had now engaged himself. God is well pleased in him, and so well pleased in him, as to be well pleased with us in him.

While we rejoice in the perfection of our Surety's obedience for us, we should copy his example. And by attending on

all God's ordinances we shall be in the way of receiving more abundant supplies of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are children of God, accepted through his beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased.

As to Christ's temptation, Mark notices his being in the wilderness, and that he was with the wild beasts. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, that he was preserved from the wild beasts, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. It was likewise an intimation of him of the inhumanity of the men of that generation—no better than wild beasts in the wilderness, nay, abundantly worse. In that wilderness he was tempted of Satan; not by any inward sinful motions, for the prince of this world had nothing in him to fasten upon, but by outward solicitations to sin. Christ himself was tempted, to direct us whither to go for succour when we are tempted, even to Him that suffered, being tempted; that he might sympathize with us when we are tempted.

The serpent tempted the first Adam in the garden, the second in the wilderness, with different success indeed; and ever since he still tempts the children of both in all variety of places and conditions. Company and conversation have their temptations; and solitude, even the wilderness, hath its own also. No place or estate exempts, no business, not lawful labouring, eating or drinking, not even fasting and praying; in these are the most assaults, but in them is the sweetest victory.—(88.)

The angels ministered to Christ, supplied him with what he needed, and dutifully attended him. The ministration of the good angels is matter of great comfort in reference to the malicious designs of the evil angels; but much more does it comfort us, to have the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in our hearts, so that the evil one touch us not, much less shall he triumph over us.

§ 23, 24, 26, 27. Ver. 14—22. *Christ preaches and calls disciples.*

In whatever point of view we may regard the mission of John the Baptist, it must be considered as subordinate to the mission of Christ; in which case the beginning of the ministry of the latter, would be either actually or virtually the close of the ministry of the former; and we find that the true date of the beginning of the



personal ministry of Christ is, the true date of the ending of the ministry of John the Baptist.—(84.)

Jesus began to preach in Galilee, after that John was put in prison. When he had finished his testimony, then Jesus began his. The silencing of Christ's ministers shall not be the suppressing of Christ's gospel. If some be laid aside, others shall be raised up; perhaps mightier than they, to carry on the same work. Observe the great truths Christ preached; The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. This refers to the old testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introducing of it. They were not well versed in those prophecies, nor did they well observe the signs of the times. They expected the Messiah, not only to free the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbours, and therefore thought they must prepare for war and victory; but Christ tells them, that in the prospect of that kingdom approaching, they must repent, and believe the gospel. By repentance we give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we give glory to our Redeemer who came to save us from our sins. Christ hath joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. Thus the preaching of the gospel began, and thus it continues; still the call is, Repent and believe, and live a life of repentance and a life of faith.

Though Christ needs not the help of man, he is pleased to use it in setting up his kingdom. And Christ puts honour upon those who, though mean in this world, are diligent in their business and loving to one another. He found James and John employed, and employed together. Industry and unity are good and pleasant, and there the Lord Jesus commands the blessing, Follow me. Those Christ calls, must leave all to follow him; and by his grace he inclines them to do so. Not that we must needs go out of the world immediately, but we must sit loose to the world; forsake every thing that is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without prejudice to our souls. James and John left not only their father, but the hired servants. Perhaps it is an intimation of their care for their father; they did not leave him without assistance. Or it evidences that their calling was gainful to them.

When Christ came into Capernaum, he took the first opportunity of preaching the gospel. Those will think themselves concerned not to lose time, who consider how much work they have to do, and the little time they have to do it in. Christ religiously observed the sabbath-day, by applying himself unto, and abounding in the sabbath-work, in order to which the sabbath-rest was instituted. In religious assemblies on sabbath-days, the gospel is to be preached, and those to be taught, who are willing to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. Christ taught as one that had authority to declare the mind of God. There is much in the doctrine of Christ that is astonishing; the more we hear it, the more cause we see to admire it.

15. By "the time is fulfilled," is meant, the period to intervene between the delivery of the prophecies, or any other assigned by the prophets, and the appearing of the Messiah. This had been expressly revealed to Daniel, and was understood by many of the Jews to mean 490 years from the rebuilding of the temple, and at this time there was a general expectation of the Deliverer. See *Campbell*, who remarks, that it is important to observe, that both the time and the place of our Lord's birth agreed with the interpretations then given of the prophecies by the Jews themselves.

The expression, "the kingdom of God," or, the kingdom of heaven, sometimes refers to the beginning, by the teaching and death of Christ, of the dominion the Messiah was about to establish; sometimes it refers to its gradual progress, and the establishment of the christian church. It is also used to express eternal life, the full completion of happiness in a future state. The Jews had long used the expression to describe the reign of the Messiah whom they expected.

17. The act of fishing has been considered emblematical, Ezek. 47, 10. The ancient christians called themselves fishermen. From St John's account, it appears these disciples had been already convinced by Christ's miracles and doctrine.

§ 27. Ver. 23—28. *Christ casts out an unclean spirit.*

In these verses we have Christ's casting an unclean spirit out of a man that was possessed. The devil is here called an unclean spirit, because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit of God, and because with his suggestions he pollutes the spirits of men. This man was in the synagogue. There are many in our assemblies who quietly attend while only formal teachers officiate; but if the Lord come with faithful ministers and holy doctrine, and by his convincing Spirit, they begin to cry out and are ready to say, What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth!

The unclean spirit cried out, as one in an

agony, at the presence of Christ; thus the devils believe and tremble, have a horror of Christ, but no hope in him, nor reverence for him. We are told what he said; he spoke as one that knew his doom. No disorder could enable a man to know Jesus to be the Holy One of God, who came to destroy the works of the devil; this was doubtless the unclean spirit speaking by the man. He desires to have nothing to do with Jesus Christ, for he despairs of being saved by him, and dreads being destroyed by him. See whose language they speak, that say to the Almighty, Depart from us. This unclean spirit hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a Holy One; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, especially against his holiness.

It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, Let us alone; his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved, and therefore Jesus commands. As he taught, so he healed with authority. Jesus rebuked him; he imposed silence upon him. Such acknowledgments as this was, Christ wholly disdains. Some confess Christ to be the Holy One of God, that under this profession they may carry on malicious, mischievous designs; but their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. This is not all; the evil spirit must not only hold his peace, but must come out of the man. The unclean spirit dreaded being restrained from doing further mischief, but yields, for there is no remedy. It could not touch Christ, but in fury at him grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ by his grace delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without grievous tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will disquiet those whom he cannot destroy.

This astonished all who saw it. It was evident, beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed, and it was evident that the devil was forced out by the authority of Christ. This put them upon considering, What is this new doctrine? For it must certainly be of God, being thus confirmed. Surely it is our interest to secure his friendship, who controls infernal spirits.

Immediately the fame of Christ spread abroad, so that it was universally concluded, that he was a Teacher come from God; and under that character he shone more bright than if he had appeared in all the outward

pomp and power in which the Jews expected their Messiah to appear.

The immediate and perfect cure of a frantic madman by a word speaking, would, even in our days, excite astonishment; yet a work really greater, often is wrought, and men treat it with contempt and neglect. If this were not so, the conversion of a notorious profligate to a sober, righteous, and godly life, by the preaching of a crucified Saviour, would cause all around to inquire, What doctrine is this? By this the fame of Jesus and the honour of the gospel spread abroad; and if all who profess the doctrines of grace were thus evidently changed, they would prevail against all opposition.

26. "Torn him," rather, "convulsed him."

§ 28. Ver. 29-39. *Christ heals many diseased.*

When Christ came out of the synagogue, where he had taught and healed with Divine authority, he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen that attended him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him. He went into Peter's house, probably invited thither to such entertainment as a poor fisherman could give him, and he accepted of it. The apostles left all for Christ; yet not so, but that they might use it for him. He cured Peter's mother-in-law, who was sick. Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. He cures, that we may minister to him, and to those that are his for his sake. Those who are confined from public ordinances by sickness or other real hinderance, may expect the Saviour's gracious presence, and that he will soothe their sorrows, and abate their pains.

It was the evening of the sabbath, when the sun did set, or was set; perhaps many scrupled bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over, but their weakness therein was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Though he proved it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days, yet they were welcome at other times. Observe how numerous the patients were. Others speeding well with Christ should quicken us in our inquiries after him. Christ was flocked after in a private house, as well as in the synagogue; wherever he is, there let his servants, his patients be. And in the evening of the sabbath, when the public worship is over, we must continue our attendance upon Jesus Christ. He healed, as Paul preached, publicly, and from house

to house. He healed all that were brought to him. Nor was it some one particular disease, his word was and is a salve for every sore. That miracle which he wrought in the synagogue, he repeated in the house; for he cast out many devils.

Observe, Christ's retirement to private devotion, to set us an example of secret prayer. Though as God he was prayed to, as man he prayed. Though he was glorifying God, and doing good, in his public work, yet he found time to be alone with his Father; and thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness.

It was in the morning, after the sabbath-day. When a sabbath-day is over and past, we must not intermit our devotion till the next sabbath; we must go to the throne of grace every day in the week, particularly the morning after the sabbath, that we may preserve the good impressions of the day. It was early. When our spirits are most fresh, we should take time for devout exercises.

He departed into a solitary place. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vainglory, yet he retired, to set us an example. Those who have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must sometimes be alone with God.

The disciples followed him to his solitary place, and there found him at prayer. They were proud that their Master was become so popular already, and would have him appear in public. Though he blamed not their interruption, he saw not good to go again among the same people at present; perhaps because the multitude were desirous to make him king.

32. The Jews scrupled carrying burdens on the sabbath, which, being reckoned from evening to evening, ended at sunset.

§ 29. Ver. 40—45. *Christ heals a leper*

We have here Christ's cleansing of a leper. It teaches us,

1. How to apply ourselves to Christ. With great humility; this leper came beseeching him, and kneeling down to him. It teaches us that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour and glory to Christ, and approach to him with humility and reverence. What we believe of the power of Christ we must bring home to our particular case; Thou canst do this for me. With submission to the will of Christ; Lord, if thou wilt, and not as with any doubt of Christ's readiness to help the distressed.

2. What to expect from Christ; that according to our faith it shall be to us. Affectionate professions of faith in Christ, and resignation to him, are the most prevailing petitions for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly. Christ was moved with compassion. This is added here, to show that Christ's power is employed by his pity, for the relief of poor souls; that we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our misery makes us the objects of his mercy. Christ's power was put forth in and by a word, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures. The poor leper said, If thou wilt. Christ must readily will favours to those who most readily refer themselves to his will. He was confident of Christ's power; and Christ will show how much his power is drawn out by the faith of his people. The cure was perfected in an instant.

3. What to do when we have received mercy from Christ. When Christ had cured the leper, he strictly charged him; the word here is very significant—prohibiting with threats. Probably this was such a charge as to the impotent man, John 5. 14, Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee. He also appointed him to show himself to the priest, that the priest, by his own judgment of this leper, might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, Matt. 11. 5. Till he had done that, he was not to say any thing of it to any man. This is an example to us not to seek our own glory, Prov. 25. 27. Christ would have nothing done that looked like ostentation, or seeking popular applause. But no reasons now exist why we should hesitate to spread the praises of Christ. The more sinners flock to him from every quarter, the greater is his honour, and the more complete his triumph and joy.

45. *Witsius* considers that Christ only enjoined silence till the leper had shown himself to the priests, for the fulfilling of the law, and that the reality of the cure might thus be confirmed by authority, and that no previous report of the miracle should reach them, lest they should deny its reality.

## CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—12.	M. 9. 2—8.	L. 5. 17—26.
Ver. 14.	M. 9. 9.	L. 5. 27, 28.
Ver. 15—22.	M. 9. 10—17.	L. 5. 29—39.
Ver. 23—28.	M. 12. 1—8.	L. 6. 1—5.

§ 30. Ver. 1—12. *Christ heals one sick of the palsy.*

Observe the great resort there was to Christ. Where Shiloh is, there shall the

gathering of the people be, Gen. 49. 10. In improving opportunities for our souls, we must take care not to lose time. One invited another, so that there was no room to receive them, they were so numerous. Many perhaps came only for cures, many only for curiosity; but when Jesus had them together, he preached to them. Though the synagogue was open to him, he preached in a house on a week day.

While Jesus was instructing them, four persons came, bringing on a bed a man, who was so enfeebled by the palsy, that he could not else be conveyed to him. It was this man's misery that he needed to be so carried, and speaks the calamitous state of human life; it was their charity who so carried him, and speaks the compassion that should be in the children of men, toward their fellow-creatures in distress. These petitioners for the poor paralytic, resolving not to be disappointed, when they could not get through the crowd at the door, got their friend to the roof of the house, took off part of the roof or covering, and let him down upon his bed, with cords, to where Christ was preaching. This showed their faith and their fervency. He commended their faith, because they brought their friend through so much difficulty. True faith and strong faith may work variously; but it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ. Christ said, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. Son, intimated a fatherly care of him, and concern for him. Christ owns true believers as his sons: a son, and yet sick of the palsy. Sin is the procuring cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The word of Christ was to take his thoughts off from the disease, which was the effect, and to lead them to the sin, the cause, that he might be more concerned about that, to get that pardoned. The way to remove the effect, is to take away the cause. Pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases, it either cures them, or alters their property.

The scribes were expositors of the law, and their doctrine was true—that it is blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin, and that it is God's prerogative, Isa. 43. 25. But, as is usual with such teachers, their application was false, it was the effect of their ignorance and enmity to Christ. Christ perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves; this proves him to be God, it therefore confirmed what was to be

proved, that he had authority to forgive sins; for he searched the heart, and knew what was in man, Rev. 2. 23. It magnifies the grace of Christ, in pardoning sin, that he knew men's thoughts, therefore knows more than any other can know, both of the sinfulness of their sins and the particulars of them, yet is ready to pardon. Christ then proved his power to forgive sin, by demonstrating his power to cure the man sick of the palsy. He could not have cured the disease, which was the effect, if he could not have taken away the sin, which was the cause. And his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned, it is healed. These carnal scribes would be more affected with such a consequence of pardon as the cure of a disease, than by any more spiritual consequences; therefore he made the appeal, Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? The removing of the punishment as such, was the remitting of the sin; he that could go so far in the cure, no doubt could perfect it. see Isa. 33. 24.

The sick man not only arose out of his bed, perfectly well, but to show that he had perfect strength restored to him, he took up his bed, and went forth before them all. They were all amazed, and glorified God, as indeed they ought, saying, Never were such wonders as these done before in our time. When we see what Christ doth in healing souls, we must own that we never saw the like.

Most men think themselves whole; they feel no need of a physician, and therefore despise or neglect Christ and his gospel. But the convinced, humbled sinner, who despairs of all help excepting from the Saviour, will show his faith by applying to him with all earnestness, and without delay. The blessing of forgiveness will be accompanied by such a powerful operation of renewing grace on his soul, that he will be a new creature. Being enabled to overcome evils to which he was enslaved, and to delight in duties of which he was incapable, he will manifest to others that he is pardoned and justified in Christ Jesus. Whatever proud pharisees and scribes may say, with their lips and in their hearts, against such instances of the Redeemer's power and grace, the happy change often is so evident that it cannot be gainsaid. Should any believe

their sins forgiven while they are under the power of their lusts, they deceive themselves; but the feeblest believer may attempt and perform such things at Christ's command, as otherwise shall be impossible to him. The Saviour's word is with power, and he will strengthen the willing believer to obey it.

4. Reference to the usual plan of eastern houses assists to explain this passage. The interior is an open court, over which a covering or awning is often drawn, to screen persons sitting there from the heat or rain. The paralytic being carried to the flat top of the house, either by stairs on the outside, or from some neighbouring building, the covering was drawn aside, and he was let down into the midst of the court where Jesus then was. A mat and pillow are all the bedding of the common people in the east. As the word used by Luke signifies a bed having a framework around it, and that of Mark merely a carpet or mat; probably they took the latter from the frame on which they had brought it and then let it down. The word rendered "broken up" may be translated "plucked out," and referred to this removal of the bedding from the frame. The different words used by the different evangelists often explain each other when compared.

§31. Ver. 13-17. *Levi's call, and the entertainment given to Jesus.*

It is probable that Matthew was but an indifferent character, or else, being a Jew, he would never have been a publican. However, Christ called him to follow him. Paul, though a pharisee, had been one of the chief of sinners, and yet was called to be an apostle. With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, who had been a publican, became an evangelist, the first and the fullest in writing the life of Christ. In bodily cures, ordinarily, Christ was sought unto; but in these spiritual cures he was found of them that sought him not. For this is the great evil and peril of the disease of sin, that those under it desire not to be made whole.

Herein God is wonderful, who seizes on some in the midst of youthful dissipations, or eager pursuits of the world, and purifies them for himself, makes them eminently holy, gives them great abilities, and, what is above all, ardent love and strong affection for his service. His Spirit, that holy fire, refines gross earth to the pureness of transparent glass, to be the inlet of light to his people.—(88.)

We are here told, that Christ sat at meat in Levi's house. Many publicans and sinners sat with Christ. They did not for conscience leave all to follow him, but from curiosity they came to Levi's

house to see him. The publicans, or tax-gatherers, are here and elsewhere ranked with sinners, the worst of sinners, because commonly they were such; so general were the corruptions in the execution of that office. A faithful, fair-dealing publican was rare. And because the Jews had a particular antipathy to them and their office, as a proof of their subjection to the Romans, they gave them an ill-name, and thought it scandalous to be seen in their company. Such as these our blessed Lord was pleased to converse with, when he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh.

The scribes and pharisees would not come to hear him preach, by which they might have been convinced and edified; but they would come themselves to see him sit with publicans and sinners. They endeavoured to make the disciples displeased with their Master. It is no new thing for that which is both well done and well designed, to be misrepresented, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men.

Christ would not withdraw, though the pharisees were offended. They thought the publicans were to be hated. No, saith Christ, they are to be pitied, they are sick and need a physician; they are sinners, and need a Saviour. They thought Christ's character should separate him from them. No, saith Christ, my commission directs me to them; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If the world had been righteous, there had been no occasion for my coming, either to preach repentance, or to purchase remission. It is to a sinful world that I am sent, and therefore my business lies most with those who are the greatest sinners in it.

When the faithful servants of Christ, after his example, call upon publicans and sinners to forsake all, and follow him, and meet with some success, there are those who will accuse them of encouraging vice. We must not associate with ungodly men out of love to their vain conversation, but we may from love to their souls, remembering, however, that our good Physician had the power of healing in himself, and was in no danger of taking infection; but it is not so with us. In attempting to do good to others, let us be careful we do not get injury to ourselves.

15. The entertainment given by Levi, as recorded by Mark and Luke, seems to have followed directly after his call, and to have been an

acknowledgment of it. That mentioned Mat. 9. 10, is considered by some to have been a common meal, in the house where our Lord usually stayed when at Capernaum and at a later period. This removes some minute difficulties respecting other events, which are related as occurring at that time.—See *Greenwell*.

Ver. 18-23. *Why Christ's disciples did not fast.*

The pharisees fasted twice in the week, Luke 18. 12; probably the disciples of John did so. Thus apt are strict professors to make their own practice a standard, and to censure all that do not fully come up to it. They invidiously suggest that if Christ went among sinners, to do them good, as he had pleaded, yet the disciples went to indulge their appetites, for they never knew what it was to fast, or to deny themselves. Ill-will always suspects the worst.

Christ did not escape such slanders; we should be willing to bear them, as well as careful not to deserve them; but should attend to every part of our duty in its proper order and season. Ministers should be cautious in dealing with the weak, that they may not discourage them. Weak christians must take heed not to make the yoke of Christ otherwise than as it is, easy, and sweet, and pleasant, either to themselves or to others.

19. It is usual among the Hindoos for manifestations of sorrow to be made on the day after a wedding, when the bridegroom has left the house of his father-in-law.—*Ward*.

§ 33. Ver. 26-28. *Christ justifies his disciples for plucking corn on the sabbath.*

When the pharisees thought Christ did amiss, they told the disciples, ver. 16; now, when they thought the disciples did amiss, they spake to Christ; they tried to sow discord between him and his disciples.

Christ defended them by example. They had a precedent in David's eating the shew-bread, when there was no other bread to be had. Many mistakes would be rectified, and our unjust censures of others corrected, if we would recollect what we have read in the scripture; appeals to that are most convincing. To reconcile the pharisees to the disciples plucking the corn, let them consider the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. The sabbath is a sacred and Divine institution; but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and benefit, not as a task and drudgery. God never designed it to be an imposition upon us, therefore we must not make it so to ourselves.

The sabbath was instituted for the good

of mankind, as rational creatures, living in society, having many wants and troubles, the creatures and subjects of God, preparing for a state of happiness or misery, being sinners under a dispensation of mercy. Man was not made for the sabbath, as if his observance of it could be of service to God, and he were required to adhere to the letter of it to his real injury. Every regulation respecting it, therefore, is to be interpreted according to this rule, but not otherwise.

And the sabbath was made a day of rest, in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving. The rest from worldly business is therefore necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, in public and in private; but time is allowed us for what is necessary to fit our bodies and our souls for God's service.

The sabbath-days are days of the Son of man; he is the Lord of the day, to his honour it must be observed; and the little alteration shortly after made, by changing it to the first day of the week, was in remembrance of his resurrection, therefore the christian sabbath is called the Lord's day, Rev. 1. 10.

23. The plucking of corn by a passenger was lawful; but the Jewish traditions or rules forbade it to be done on the sabbath-day, even in case of necessity, as here, though the Jews made it a duty to indulge more than usual in food on that day.

26. The sense appears to be, that this action of David was in the time of Abiathar, the noted person who was afterwards high-priest. Or the father and the son may have had both names. This appears supported by some passages in O.T.

## CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1-12. M. 12. 9-16. L. 6. 6-11.  
Ver. 13-19. M. 10. 9-4. L. 6. 12-16.  
Ver. 20-30. M. 12. 22-32. L. 11. 14-23.  
Ver. 31-35. M. 12. 46-50. L. 8. 19-21

§ 34. Ver. 1-5. *The withered hand healed.*

Acts of mercy and charity are never unseasonable, for it is as lawful to do good to man, as it is proper to attend the worship of God on the Lord's day. This man's case was piteous; he had a withered hand, which disabled him from working for his living; and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity. Let those be helped that cannot help themselves. The spectators were very unkind; instead of interceding, they did what they could to hinder his cure. It would have

been very unreasonable if they had opposed a physician or surgeon in helping any poor person in misery, by ordinary methods; much worse was it to oppose Him that cured by a word's speaking.

Christ laboured to convince their judgment. He bid the man stand forth, that by the sight of him they might be moved with compassion toward him. And then he appeals to their own consciences. What fairer question could be put? But because they saw it would turn against them, they held their peace. Obstinate infidels, when they can say nothing against a truth, yet will not yield.

When they rebelled against the light, he lamented their stubbornness, the hardness of their hearts. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is done amiss; but Christ looks at the root of bitterness in the heart, the blindness and hardness of that. He looked round upon them with anger; his anger was without the least uneasy passion, or disturbance to himself, but not without great provocation. The sin of sinners is very displeasing to Jesus Christ. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble to think of the anger with which he will look round upon them shortly, when the great day of his wrath comes. He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. It is a great grief to our Lord Jesus, to see sinners bent upon their own ruin, obstinately set against their conviction and recovery. This is a good reason why the hardness of our own hearts, and of others, should grieve us.

Christ dealt very kindly with the man; he bid him stretch forth his hand, and it was immediately restored. He has hereby taught us to go on with resolution in the way of our duty, how violent soever the opposition is that we meet with. None could be more tender of giving offence than Christ; yet, rather than send this poor man away uncured, he would venture to offend all the scribes and pharisees that compassed him about. He has hereby given us a specimen of the cures wrought by his grace upon poor souls; our hands are spiritually withered, the powers of our souls are weakened by sin, and disabled for that which is good. The great healing-day now is the sabbath, and the healing-place the house of prayer; the healing power is of Christ. The gospel command is like that recorded here; though our hands are withered, yet, if we will not offer to stretch them out, it is our own

fault that we are not healed. But if we do, and are healed, Christ and his power and grace must have all the glory.

§ 34. Ver. 6—12. *The people resort to Christ.*

Christ's works of mercy should have engaged love to him, and such works of wonder should have excited faith in him. But, instead of that, the pharisees, who pretended to be oracles in the church, and the Herodians, who pretended to be the supporters of the state, though of opposite interests, took counsel together against him, how they might destroy him. Those who suffer for doing good, do but suffer as their Master.

When some had such enmity to Jesus, that they drove him out of their country, others had such esteem for him, that they followed him wherever he went. Great multitudes followed him from all parts of the nation. Some wished to see one who had done such great things, and others hoped he would do great things for them. The consideration of the great things Christ has done, should engage us to come to him. As many as had plagues pressed upon him, to touch him. Diseases are here called plagues, corrections, chastisements; so they are designed to be. Those under these scourgings came to Jesus; sickness is sent to quicken us to inquire after Christ, and to apply ourselves to him as our Physician. They pressed upon him, each striving who should get nearest him. They desired leave but to touch him, having faith to be healed by their touching him. He spake to his disciples, who were fishermen, that a boat should constantly wait on him, to carry him from place to place on the same coast, where his presence was requisite.

He healed many who were ill of divers sorts of diseases; though numerous, though various. Devils were effectually conquered, and compelled to own he was the Son of God, ver. 11. It is sad that this great truth should be denied by any of the children of men, who may have the benefit of it, when a confession of it has often been extorted from devils, who are excluded from having benefit by it. Christ sought not applause to himself in doing these great things, for he strictly charged those for whom he did them, that they should not make him known; that they should not be industrious to spread the notice of his cures. When we do what is praiseworthy, and yet covet

not praise of men for it, then the same mind is in us which was in Christ Jesus.

All our sicknesses and calamities spring from the anger of God against us for our sins; their removal, or the sanctifying them; to be blessings to our souls, was purchased to us by the blood of Christ. But the plagues and maladies of our hearts are chiefly to be deprecated, and He can heal them also by a word. May increasing numbers press to Christ to be healed of these plagues and to be delivered from the enemies of their souls.

8. Those Jews who dwelt near Tyre and Sidon, not the inhabitants of those cities.—*Orotius*. Idumea was the country to the south of Judea. When conquered by the Maccabees, the Edomites became incorporated with the Jews, and the whole of Judea was sometimes called Idumea by the Greeks and Romans.

§ 35, 42. Ver. 13—21. *The apostles called.*

In these verses we have the choice Christ made of the twelve apostles to be his constant followers and attendants. Christ calls whom he will; for his grace is his own. He had called them to separate themselves from the crowd and they came unto him. Those whom it was his will to call, he made willing to come; his people shall be willing in the day of his power. Perhaps they came in expectation of reigning with him in temporal pomp and power; but when afterwards undeceived in that matter, they had a prospect given them of better things.

He ordained them, that they should be with him constantly, to be witnesses of his doctrine, manner of life, and patience, that they might fully know, and be able to give an account of it; especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be with him, to receive instructions from him, that they might be qualified to instruct others. Christ's ministers must be much with him.

He ordained them to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. The power which Christ had to work these miracles was an original power; he could confer it upon others. Mark notices that Christ called James and John, Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder. It denotes the zeal and fervency of their spirits, which would make them active for God above their brethren. These two were to be especially eminent ministers of the gospel, which is called a voice shaking the earth, Heb. 12. 26. Yet John, one of those sons of thunder, was full of love and tenderness, as appears by his epistles, and was the beloved disciple.

May the Lord send forth more and more of those who have been with him, and have learned of him to preach his gospel, to be instruments in his blessed work.

They went into a house; but the multitude came together again, unsent for. Yet he did not shut the doors against the petitioners, but gave to each an answer of peace. Those whose hearts are enlarged in the work of God, can easily bear with great inconveniences to themselves, and will rather lose a meal than an opportunity of doing good. It is happy when zealous hearers and zealous preachers meet, and encourage one another.

When Christ's friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, they went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself. Some understand it of an absurd care, either by importunity or compulsion to oblige him to cease from his labours. Others understand it of a well-meaning care. Let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little breathing time. Those who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hinderances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and have need to be upon their guard against both.

14. "Appointed."—*Bloomfield*. "Selected."—*Campbell*.

18. Simon was not so called from being a native of Canaan, but from a Hebrew word signifying zealous; see Luke 6. 15; Acts 1. 13.

§ 42. Ver. 22—30. *The blasphemy of the scribes.*

These scribes came from Jerusalem. They took this journey to hinder the progress of the doctrine of Christ. They could not deny but that he cast out devils, which plainly showed he was sent of God; but they insinuated that he cast out devils by the prince of the devils. There was nothing in the manner of Christ's casting out devils that gave any cause to suspect this; he did it as one having authority; but so they will have it, who resolve not to believe him.

Christ fully answered this objection. It was plain that the doctrine of Christ had a direct tendency to break the devil's power, and crush his interest in the souls of men; and it was as plain, that casting of him out of the bodies of people confirmed that doctrine; therefore it cannot be imagined that Satan should come into such a design, or act so directly against his own interest. It is plain that Christ's



design is to enter into the strong man's house, ver. 27, to take possession of the interest he has in the world, and to spoil his goods, and convert them to his own service; therefore it is natural to suppose that he will thus bind the strong man, will forbid him to speak when he would, and stay where he would; thus showing that he has gained a victory over him.

Christ gave an awful warning to take heed how they spake such dangerous words; however they might make light of them, it would be of fatal consequence to them. It is true the gospel promiseth—because Christ hath purchased—forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners; but this was blaspheming the Holy Ghost, for it was by the Holy Spirit that he cast out devils, and they said, it was by the unclean spirit. By this they would oppose the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension. They were in imminent danger of everlasting punishment, from which there was no redemption, and in which there was no intermission.

Such is the enmity of the heart, that unconverted men will impute the most beneficial effects to the basest motives, and even pretend that men are doing Satan's work, when sinners are brought to repentance and newness of life. But let men beware how they ascribe the operations of the Holy Ghost to the power of Satan, or how they deride and revile them. (See Matt. 12. 31, 32.)

#### Ver. 31—35. *Christ's relatives.*

Christ's kindred, according to the flesh, showed disrespect to him, when he was preaching. They not only stood without, having no desire to come in, and hear him, but they sent a message to call him out to them.

He looked upon those who sat about him, and pronounced those that not only heard, but did the will of God, to be as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations. Surely it is good to have fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ. Let all who hear, believe and obey the Saviour, according to the will of God the Father, rejoice and glory in their relation to him who will assuredly own every one of them.

It is a great comfort to all true christians, that they are dearer to Christ than mother, brother, or sister *as such*, merely as relations in the flesh, would have been, even had they been holy.—(3.)

Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is ours even now; Christ's bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied us. In heart, faith, love, and service, he is, or may be ours.—(73.)

### CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1—20.	M. 13. 1—23.	L. 8. 4—15.
Ver. 21—25.		L. 8. 16—18.
Ver. 26—34.	M. 13. 31—34.	
Ver. 35.	M. 8. 18.	L. 8. 22.
Ver. 36—41.	M. 8. 23—27.	L. 8. 23—25.

§ 49. Ver. 1—20. *The parable of the sower.*

Christ taught the multitude many things, but it was by parables, or similitudes, which would tempt them to hear; for people like to be spoken to in their own language: careless hearers will catch a plain comparison borrowed from common things, and will retain that, when they take not the truth it is to explain.

When the multitude was gone, not only the twelve, but others that were about him, took the opportunity to ask him the meaning of the parables. He told them what a distinguishing favour it was that they were made acquainted with the mystery of the kingdom of God, ver. 11. That instructed them which others were only amused with, and they were made to increase in knowledge by every parable, and understood more of the way and method in which Christ designed to set up his kingdom in the world. Those who know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, must acknowledge it is given to them; they receive both the light and the sight from Jesus Christ.

We have here the parable of the sower. Christ begins with, Hearken, and concludes with, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. This parable contained instruction so important, that all who were capable of hearing were bound to give peculiar attention to it. The words of Christ demand attention; those who speak from him may command it, and should stir it up; even that which as yet we do not thoroughly understand, or not rightly, we must carefully attend to, for we shall find more in Christ's sayings than at first there seemed to be.

Here is a question Christ put to the disciples before he expounded the parable. There are many things which we are concerned to know; and if we understand not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we master those which are more

difficult? It will help us to value the privileges we enjoy as disciples of Christ, if we seriously consider the deplorable state of those who want such privileges. And those that would improve in knowledge, must be made sensible of their ignorance. He then gives the interpretation of the parable of the sower. From the whole let us observe here,

1. In the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all. He scatters it, in order to the increase of it. Christ himself sowed, when he went about teaching and preaching; now he sends his ministers, and sows by their hand. Ministers are sowers; they need the skill and discretion of the husbandmen, Isa. 28. 24-26; they must not observe winds and clouds, Eccl. 11. 4, 6; but must look up to God, who gives seed to the sower, 2 Cor. 9. 10.

2. Of the many that hear the word of the gospel, comparatively but few receive it, so as to bring forth fruit. It is sad to think how much of the precious seed of the word of God is lost, and sown in vain; but there is a day coming when lost sermons must be accounted for. If men do not immediately secure what they have heard, by meditation, prayer, faith, and obedience, Satan will immediately take it from their hearts and memories. Those who place all their religion in hearing, as if that alone would save them, do but deceive themselves, and build their hopes on the sand, Jam. 1. 22.

3. Many are much affected with the word for the present, who yet receive no abiding benefit. Those represented here by the stony ground, received the word with gladness, and yet came to nothing. No impressions will be durable that are not deep; superficial convictions, and the profession that springs from them, will vanish and come to nothing.

4. The word does not leave commanding, abiding impressions upon the minds of the people, because their hearts are not duly disposed to receive it; the fault is in themselves, not in the word. Some are careless, forgetful hearers, and these get no good by the word. Others have their convictions overpowered by their corruptions, and lose the good impressions the word has made upon them, so that they get no abiding good by it.

5. The devil is very busy about careless hearers, as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground. When

the heart, like the highway, is unploughed, unhumbled, when it lies common, to be trodden on by every passenger, as theirs who are great company-keepers, then the devil, like the fowls, carries away the word before we are aware. When these fowls come down upon the sacrifices, we should take care, as Abram, to drive them away, Gen. 15. 11, that, though we cannot keep them from hovering over our heads, they may not nestle in our hearts.

6. Many who do not openly throw off their profession, as those meant by the stony ground, yet have the efficacy of it secretly stifled, so that it comes to nothing. They continue in a barren, hypocritical profession, which brings nothing to pass, and go down as certainly, though more plausibly, to hell.

7. Impressions that are not deep, will not be durable, but will wear off in suffering, trying times; like footsteps on the sand of the sea, which are gone the next high tide of persecution. When iniquity abounds, the love of many to the ways of God waxes cold. Many that keep their profession in fair days, lose it in a storm; and like those who go to sea only for pleasure, come back again when the wind rises. Hypocrites have no root; they do not act from a fixed principle; they do not mind heart-work, without which religion is nothing; for he is the true christian that is one inwardly.

8. Many are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by abundance of the world. Many good lessons of humility, charity, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness are thus choked and lost.

9. Those that are not encumbered with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may yet lose the benefit of their profession by the lusts of other things, by inordinate appetites towards things pleasing to sense or fancy. Those who have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by indulging the body.

10. God expects and requires fruit from those who enjoy the gospel, fruit according to the seed; a temper of mind and course of life agreeable to the gospel: christian graces daily exercised, christian duties duly performed. This is fruit and it will abound to our account.

11. No good fruit is to be expected but from good seed. If the good seed be sown on good ground, if the heart be made humble, holy, and heavenly, there will be good fruit, and it will abound.

Let us look to the Lord, that by his new creating grace our hearts may become good ground, and that the good seed of the word may produce a large increase in our lives, of all those good words and works which are through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

12. *Le Clerc* observes, this expression is a proverbial one, and relates to those who might see, if they would use their faculties, that which they now overlook through inattention or folly.

§ 49. Ver. 21—34. *Other parables.*

These declarations were intended to call the attention of the disciples to the word of Christ. By thus instructing them, they were qualified to be instructors of others; as candles are lighted, not to be covered, but to be placed on a candlestick, that they may give light to a room. The meaning of our Lord's discourses was afterwards to be spread abroad in the most extensive and plainest manner. They were therefore to take heed what they heard, and how they heard it, that they might receive the truth only, and all of it; that they might impart it to others, as well as adorn it by their lives. According to their faithfulness they would be dealt with. More spiritual gifts would be given to those who heard the word in faith and with attention, according to the general rule of his kingdom. Though our light is only as the feeble glimmering of a candle, compared with the splendour of the Sun of righteousness, yet we may hope to receive from him, and to communicate to others, some rays of heavenly wisdom, provided we seek that our conversation be consistent with the gospel. And we be to those who reject, corrupt, or attempt to conceal the light that Christ came to diffuse among mankind!

This parable of the good seed represents the manner in which the kingdom of God makes progress in the world, by his blessing on the labours of his ministers. The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, by degrees produces wonderful effects, but without noise, ver. 26, &c. So is the kingdom of God; so is the gospel, when it is sown as seed in good ground.

It will come up; though it seem lost and buried under the clods, the seed cast into the ground will spring.\* Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself, as the wisdom from above, in a good conversation. After a field is sown with corn,

how soon is the surface of it altered! How pleasant does it look!

The husbandman cannot describe how corn comes up; it is one of the mysteries of nature. He sees it has grown, but he cannot tell in what manner it grew, or what was the cause and method of its growth. Thus we know not how the Spirit, by the word, makes a change in the heart, any more than we can account for the blowing of the wind, which we hear the sound of, but cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, how God manifested in the flesh came to be believed on in the world.

The husbandman, when he has sown the seed, does nothing toward the springing of it up; he goes to sleep at night, rises in the morning, and follows his other business, yet the earth brings forth fruit of itself, according to the ordinary course of nature, and by the concurring power of the God of nature. Thus the word of grace, when received in faith, is in the heart a work of grace, and the preachers contribute nothing to it. The Spirit of God is carrying it on when they sleep, or when they rise to go about other business.

It grows gradually; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. When it is sprung up, it will go forward; nature will have its course, and so will grace. Christ's interest, both in the world and in the heart, is, and will be a growing interest; and though the beginning be small, the latter end will greatly increase. Though at first it is but a tender blade, which the frost may nip, or the foot may crush, yet it will increase to the ear, to the full corn in the ear. God carries on his work insensibly and without noise, but without fail.

It comes to perfection at last. When the fruit is brought forth, that is, when it is ripe, then the sickle is put in. This intimates that, from the fruit of the gospel taking place and working in the soul, Christ gathers in a harvest of honour to himself: see John 4. 35. Also, that when those who receive the gospel aright have finished their course, the harvest comes, then they shall be gathered as wheat into God's barn, Matt. 13. 30.

The work of grace is small in its beginnings, but comes to be great and considerable at last. Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God, as now to be set up

by the Messiah? Christ speaks as one considering how to illustrate it with an apt similitude. The comparison is to a small seed, to show,

1. That the beginnings of the gospel kingdom would be very small, like that which is one of the least of all seeds. The work of grace in the soul is, at first, but the day of small things. Never were such great things undertaken by such an inconsiderable handful, as that of the discipling of the nations by the ministry of the apostles.

2. That the perfection of it will be very great. When it grows up, it becomes greater than all herbs. The gospel kingdom in the world shall increase and spread to the remotest nations of the earth, and shall continue to the latest ages of time. The work of grace in the soul has mighty products even now, while it is in its growth; but what will they be when it is perfected in heaven!

After these parables the evangelist concludes with this general account of Christ's preaching—that with many such parables he spake the word unto the people. Christ took his comparisons from things familiar to them, and delivered them in plain expressions. But, for the present, without a parable he spake not to them. These things will not be plain to others, but Christ will expound them to his disciples; if we follow him more closely than the multitude around, he will teach us, both by his precepts and by his example.

See general note on the parables.

§ 50. Ver. 35—41. *Christ stilleth the tempest.*

The miracle Christ wrought in stilling the storm is here fully related. He proposed putting to sea at night, thereby showing he would lose no time. Thus industrious we should be in serving him, and our generation, according to his will. They did not put to sea till they had sent away the multitude, that is, had answered all their requests; for he sent none home, complaining that they had attended him in vain. The storm was so great that the ship was full of water. It is no new thing for that ship to be greatly endangered in which Christ and his disciples, Christ and his gospel, are embarked.

There were with him other little ships, which, no doubt, shared in the distress and danger. The multitude went away when he put to sea, but some there were who would venture upon the water with

him. Those follow the Lamb aright, that follow him wherever he goes. And those that hope for happiness in Christ, must be willing to take their lot with him. We may cheerfully put to sea in Christ's company, yea, though we foresee a storm.

Christ was asleep in this storm. He had a pillow, such a one as a fisherman's ship would furnish him with. And he slept, to try the faith of his disciples, and to stir up prayer. Upon the trial, their faith appeared weak, and their prayers, strong. Sometimes, when the church is in a storm, Christ seems unconcerned in the troubles of his people, and regardless of their prayers. Their address to Christ is expressed very emphatically; Master, carest thou not that we perish? But the matter is not so; he is not willing that any should perish, much less any of his little ones, Matt. 18. 14.

We have here the word of command with which Christ rebuked the storm. He says, Peace, be still—be silent, be dumb. Let not the wind any longer roar, nor the sea rage. This is a word of command to us. When our wicked hearts are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, Isa. 57. 20, when our passions are unruly, let us think we hear the law of Christ, saying, Be silent, be dumb. It is a word of comfort to us, that, be the storm of trouble ever so loud, ever so strong, Jesus Christ can lay it with a word's speaking. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, if he say, Peace, be still, there is a great calm presently.

The reproof Christ gave them for their fears, is here carried further than in Matthew. Why are ye so fearful? Though there may be cause for some fear, yet not for fear to such a degree as this. How is it that ye have no faith? They believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; but at this time their fears prevailed, so that they seemed to have no faith at all. Excessive fears, in our little difficulties and dangers, indicate that we have hardly any faith, notwithstanding what we have heard, witnessed, and experienced of his power, truth, and love, who is the mighty God, the Prince of peace, who never faileth them that trust in him. Those may suspect their faith, who can entertain such a thought as that Christ careth not though his people perish.

Observe the impression this miracle made on the disciples. They feared

greatly. When they feared the winds and the seas, it was for want of due reverence for Christ. But now they feared them less, and him more. They had feared the power and wrath of the Creator in the storm, and that fear had torment and amazement in it; but now they feared the power and grace of the Redeemer in the calm; they feared the Lord and his goodness, it had pleasure and satisfaction, and by it they gave glory to Christ.

How imperfect the composition of the best of saints. Faith and fear take their turns while we are in this world; but ere long our fear will be vanquished, and our faith will be swallowed up in sight. Lord, we pray thee to cause our souls to long for that joyful hour.—(73.)

37. *Dr. E. Clarke* describes the lake of Genesareth as often agitated by sudden tempests, like many other inland waters; also from the strong current of the Jordan through the middle of the lake, which is frequently met by strong blasts of south-east wind, when a boisterous sea is raised, such as the small vessels of the country are scarcely able to resist.

## CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1-21. M. 8. 28-34. L. 8. 26-40.  
Ver. 22-43. M. 9. 18-26. L. 8. 41-56.

§ 51. Ver. 1-20. *The demoniac healed.*

This chapter calls us to consider the varied glories of our Redeemer's power and love. Each of the instances set before us may be considered, not only as a miracle, but as an emblem of his gracious working on the souls of men.

Observe here, the miserable condition of this poor creature; he was under the power of an unclean spirit. His condition seems to have been worse than any of the other possessed, who were Christ's patients. He had his dwelling among the tombs. The tombs of the Jews were out of the cities. The touch of a grave was polluting, Numb 19. 16. The unclean spirit drives people into company that is defiling, and so keeps possession of them. Christ, by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, saves the living from among the dead.

He was very strong and ungovernable. This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; those children of disobedience, in whom the unclean spirit works. Some notoriously wilful sinners are like this madman. The commands of the law are as chains and fetters, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they break

those bands in sunder, and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.

He was a terror and torment to himself and to all about him. The devil is a cruel master to those who are led captive by him, a perfect tyrant. The voice of God is, Do thyself no harm; the voice of Satan is, Do thyself all the harm thou canst; yet God's word is despised, and Satan's regarded.

When he saw Jesus afar off, coming ashore, he ran, and worshipped him. He usually ran upon others with rage, but he ran to Christ with reverence. Even the devil, in this poor creature, was forced to tremble before Christ, and bow to him. The design of Christ's gospel is to expel unclean spirits out of the souls of people. Come out of the man thou unclean spirit, that the Holy Spirit may possess the heart, and have dominion in it.

The devil in the man cried with a loud voice, making use of the poor man's tongue, What have I to do with thee? He calls God, the most high God. He owns Jesus to be the Son of God. It is no strange thing to hear the best words drop from the worst mouths. He disowns any design against Christ. He deprecates his wrath.

Christ asked him, What is thy name? Christ could call all the fallen stars, as well as the morning stars, by their names; but he demands this, that the standers-by might be affected with the vast numbers and power of those malignant infernal spirits, as they had reason to be, when the answer was, My name is Legion, for we are many. A legion of soldiers among the Romans consisted of six thousand men, or more. What multitudes of apostate spirits must there be, and all enemies to God and man, when here was a legion in one poor wretched creature. Many there are that rise up against us. This gives us a tremendous view of the subject, though we need not determine concerning the precise number of these spirits thus combined under one head to harass this man. Who can conceive the numbers there are in this world, whose unremitted efforts are for the destruction of mankind in body and soul! May this warn us to flee to the Refuge set before us. We are not a match for our spiritual enemies, in our own strength; but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, we shall be able to stand against them, though there are legions of them.

Christ gave them permission to enter into the swine. Those who delight in the mire of sensual lusts, are fit habitations for Satan. The consequence was, that they all ran into the adjoining sea. The man the devils possessed, had only cut himself, for God had not permitted them to take away his life. See how much we are indebted to the providence of God, and the ministration of good angels, for preservation from malignant spirits.

The report of all this drew the people together, and when they saw how wonderfully the poor man was cured, they conceived a veneration for Christ. They saw him that was possessed with the devil, sitting clothed and in his right mind. When the vilest transgressor is delivered by the power of Jesus from the bondage of Satan, he will gladly sit at the feet of his Deliverer, and hear his word. Words cannot express the blessed change, when Jesus delivers the wretched slaves of Satan, and numbers them among his saints and servants. Those who live by rule and with consideration, thereby make it appear that by the power of Christ the devil's power is broken in their souls. But when the people found that their swine were lost, they conceived a dislike to Christ; they prayed him to depart out of their coasts, for they think not any good he can do them sufficient to make them amends for the loss of so many swine! Now the devils had what they desired; for by no handle do these evil spirits more effectually manage sinful souls than by the love of the world. And such strange misconstructions do carnal hearts make of the just judgments of God; instead of being by them driven to him as they ought, they set him at so much the greater distance. But long-suffering and mercy may be recognised in the corrections by which men are deprived of their property, while their lives are preserved, and warning given them to seek the salvation of their souls.

The poor man who was delivered, desired that he might go along with Christ. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, will covet acquaintance and fellowship with Jesus. But Christ had other work for him; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord Jesus had done, that his neighbours and friends might be invited to believe in him. The Saviour sometimes chooses those who have been the wretched bond-slaves of

Satan for his ministers; and while they publish what great things he has done for them, they are rendered blessings, perhaps in the very places where once they were most mischievous. Indeed we seem to be continued, after conversion, in this world of sin and sorrow, chiefly to declare and display, by word and deed, the Saviour's power and grace.

He must take particular notice rather of Christ's pity than of his power; he must tell them what compassion the Lord had upon him in his misery. The man joyfully proclaimed, all the country over, what great things Jesus had done for him. All men marvelled, but few went any further. Many who cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, wonder after him.

1. Matthew says, "the country of the Gergesenes." Gadara was a city of Perca, a region beyond Jordan; Gergesa was an adjoining town.

4. Fetters here denote chains for the feet; chains, those for the hands and body in general.

9. The expression is used to denote a large number, not exactly that of a legion.

15. Sitting was a proof of being in a right mind. Maniacs seldom sit. In Matthew two demoniacs are mentioned, in Mark and Luke only one, but they do not say that there was only one. One only, perhaps, is mentioned by them, he having been more fierce than the other, or only one expressed his gratitude. In historical narratives it may be considered a rule, that the greater number embraces the less, and the smaller number, if not expressly limited, does not deny the existence of more.

§ 52. Ver. 21—34. *A woman healed by touching the hem of Christ's garment.*

The Gadarenes having desired Christ to leave their country, he went back to the other side, and there much people gathered to him. A despised gospel will go where it will have better entertainment.

One of the rulers of the synagogue, one that presided in the synagogue, addressed himself to Christ; though a ruler, with great humility and reverence; and with great importunity he besought him, as one in earnest, who not only valued the mercy he came for, but knew he could obtain it nowhere else. He had a little daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying; so Mark. But afterward, upon fresh information being received, he saith, She is even now dead; so Matthew. But he still prosecutes his suit; see Luke 8. 42, 49. Christ readily went with him.

A cure was wrought by the way. Many of Christ's discourses, and some of his miracles, were by the way-side; we should do good, not only when in the house, but when we walk by the way, Deut. 6. 7.

Observe the piteous case of this poor woman. She had a constant issue of blood for twelve years, which had thrown her into great weakness, had imbibittered the comfort of her life, and threatened to be her death. She had the best advice of physicians that she could get, and had made use of the many medicines and methods they prescribed; but now she had spent all she had among them, and they gave her up as incurable. All that a man has will he give for life and health. It is ill with those who suffer by their physicians, instead of being relieved by them. It is too common with people not to apply to Christ till they have tried in vain all other helpers, and find them, as certainly they will, physicians of no value. But he will be found a sure Refuge, even to those who make him their last Refuge. Some run to diversions and gay company, to try to pacify an uneasy conscience, or to relieve the dejection of their spirits; others plunge into business or speculations, or even into intemperance, for the same purpose; others go about to establish their own righteousness, or torment themselves by vain superstitions. Many perish in these ways; but none will ever find rest to the soul by such devices. Happy, then, are those who by many disappointments are led to expect help from Jesus alone.

She had strong faith in the power of Christ to heal her. She said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole. She believed that he cured, not as a prophet, by virtue from God, but as the Son of God, by virtue in himself. She wished for a private cure, and her faith was suited to her case. It is great encouragement to humble christians, that those who hide themselves from men are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications when most private.

She came in the crowd behind him, and touched his garment; immediately she felt the cure wrought. She felt herself perfectly well in an instant; by this it appears the cure was altogether miraculous; for those who in such cases are cured by natural means, recover strength slowly and gradually; but as for God, his work is perfect. Those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, experience in themselves universal change for the better.

Christ knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him. The disciples almost ridiculed his question; The multitudes throng thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Christ looks round, not that he might blame her presumption, but that he might encourage her faith, and might confirm the cure she had obtained. He needed not that any should inform him. As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith are known to the Lord Jesus. The poor woman presented herself to the Lord Jesus, fearing and trembling, not knowing how he would take it. Christ's patients often tremble, when they have reason to triumph. She might have come boldly, knowing what was done; yet, knowing that, she fears and trembles. She fell down before him. There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble, than to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus; to humble themselves before him, and refer themselves to him. She told him all the truth. We must, when called to it, mention to his praise, and the encouragement of others, what he has done for our souls, our experience of healing virtue derived from him. The consideration that nothing can be hid from Christ should engage us to confess all to him. He gave her an encouraging word; Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and he has all power to command comfort to troubled spirits.

This example instructs us to encourage those who humbly rely on Christ for pardon and grace, though much confusion, and many defects, appear in their judgment and conduct. The more singly we depend on Him, and expect great things from him, the more evidently we shall find in ourselves that he is become our salvation. Those who by faith are healed of their spiritual diseases, have indeed reason to go in peace.

26. The writings of the rabbins show the absurd nostrums prescribed by the ancient Jewish physicians. See *Lightfoot*.

30. "Knowing that the power of working miracles, which was inherent in him, had gone out of him." The expression imports that Christ was fully aware that a miracle had been worked by his power and efficacy.—*Bloomfield*.

† 52. Ver. 35—43. *The daughter of Jairus raised.*

The melancholy news is brought to Jairus, that his daughter is dead. When life is gone, it is past recall. Ordinarily, the proper thought in this case, is, The matter is determined, the will of God is done, and I submit, I acquiesce; The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. With such words we should quiet ourselves at such a time, but here the case was extraordinary.

Christ encouraged the afflicted father to hope that his application should not be in vain. Christ had stayed to work a cure by the way, but he shall be no sufferer by that, nor lose by the gain of others; He not afraid, only believe. We may suppose Jairus hesitating whether he should ask Christ to go on or not; but have we not as much occasion for the grace of God, and the consolations of his Spirit, and consequently for the prayers of our ministers and christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is there? Faith is the only remedy against disquieting grief and fear at such a time: let that silence. Only believe—keep up confidence in Christ, and dependence upon him; he will do what is for the best. Believe the resurrection, then fear not.

He suffered no man to follow him, but Peter, and James, and John, a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle, but not such a number that taking them would look like vainglory.

He raised the dead child to life. We may observe, 1. That the child was extremely beloved. It is very afflicting when that which is come forth like a flower, is so soon cut down, and withereth before it is grown up; when that grieves us, of which we said, This same shall comfort us. 2. It was evident beyond dispute, that the child was really and truly dead. 3. Christ put those out, as unworthy to be witnesses of the miracle, who were noisy in their sorrow; so ignorant in the things of God, as not to understand him when he spake of death as a sleep, or so scornful as to ridicule him for it. 4. He took the parents to witness the miracle, for their faith and comfort. 5. Christ raised the child to life by a word of power, which is recorded in Syriac, the language Christ spake, *Thalitha, cumi*; Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. Such is the gospel call to those who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more rise from that death by their own power, than this child; and yet the command, "Awake, and arise from the dead," is neither vain, nor in vain; there follows immediately, Christ shall give thee light, Eph. 5. 14. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given. 6. The damsel, as soon as life returned, arose, and walked, ver. 42. Spiritual life will appear by our rising from the bed of sloth and carelessness, and walking in a religious conversation, our walking up and down in Christ's name

and strength. Even from those who are of the age of twelve years, it may be expected that they should walk as those whom Christ has raised to life, and not proceed in the native vanity of their minds. 7. All who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle and Him that wrought it. Their wonder should have worked forward to lively faith, but it rested in astonishment. 8. Christ charged them straitly that no man should know this. It was sufficiently known to a competent number, but he would not have it as yet proclaimed any further, because his own resurrection was to be the great instance of his power over death. 9. Christ took care something should be given her to eat. By this it appeared that she was raised, not only to life, but to good health, in that she had an appetite. Where Christ gives spiritual life, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will never forsake, or be wanting to the work of his own hands. Though we cannot now expect to have deceased children or relatives restored, we may hope to experience consolation under our trials.

May the Lord Jesus Christ raise our souls from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may feed on his spiritual provisions, and walk with him in his holy ways, as proofs of his grace; that when he shall at length appear, we may appear with him in glory.

41, 43. It appears from the Talmud, that the Hebrew physicians were accustomed to salute the sick by saying, Arise from your disease; and that a sick man was judged to be recovering when he took his usual food. Thus our Lord in effecting the miracle assumed the character of the great Physician.

## CHAPTER VI.

V. 1-6. M. 13. 54-58.  
 V. 7-12. M. 10. 1-15. L. 9. 1-6.  
 V. 14-16. M. 14. 1, 2. L. 9. 7-9.  
 V. 17, 18. M. 14. 3, 4. L. 3. 19, 20.  
 V. 21-29. M. 14. 6-12.  
 V. 30. L. 9. 10.  
 V. 32-44. M. 14. 13-21. L. 9. 10-17. J. 6. 1-13.  
 V. 45-58. M. 14. 22-36. J. 6. 15-21.  
 § 55. Ver. 1-6. Christ despised in his own country

We are here taught by our Lord's example, to renew our endeavours for the good even of those who have treated us with cruelty or contempt, and where the same is again to be expected. We are also reminded that industry, even in the lowest lawful calling, is far more honourable and useful, than indolence and dis-



sipation. Let those who are so placed go on cheerfully with their callings; if God has work of another kind for them, it will be no hinderance to future usefulness.

His countrymen acknowledged the two great proofs of the Divine original of Christ's gospel—the Divine wisdom that appeared therein, and the Divine power exerted for recommending it.

They studied to raise prejudices in the minds of people against him, notwithstanding. All this wisdom, and all these mighty works, shall be of no account. Is not this the carpenter? Our Lord Jesus probably employed himself in that business with his father, before he entered upon his public ministry. He thus humbled himself, as one that had taken upon him the form of a servant, and came to minister. He thus put honour upon mechanics, and encouraged those who eat by the labour of their hands.

They upbraided him with the meanness of his relations; and therefore, though astonished at his doctrine, yet they were prejudiced against him, and looked upon him with contempt; and for that reason would not receive his doctrine. Some exceptions there may be to this rule, but ordinarily it holds good, that ministers are seldom so acceptable in their own country as among strangers. He did some good among them, notwithstanding the slights they put upon him, for he is kind even to the evil and unthankful. It becomes the followers of Christ, to content themselves with the satisfaction of doing good, although they are denied the praise of it.

How much did these Nazarenes lose by obstinate prejudices against Jesus! How many diseased bodies might have been cured, how many lost souls recovered, had they given him a better reception! May Divine grace deliver us from that unbelief, which, as it were, disarms Christ, and renders him a savour of death, rather than of life to the soul.—(80.)

Christ could there do no such mighty works, at least, not so many as in other places, because of the unbelief that prevailed among the people. This is a remarkable expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of Omnipotence itself. By unbelief and contempt of Christ, men stop his favours to them. The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of grace, is a most amazing thing. He went round about the villages, teaching. If we cannot do

good where we would, we must do it where we can. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country-villages, than in the populous cities. Let us, like our Master, go and teach poor cottagers and peasants the way of salvation.

3. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest christian writers, speaks of our Lord as having worked at making ploughs and yokes.

5, 6. It is usual in Hebrew to say that cannot be, which shall not, or ought not to be. Our Lord, in working miracles, always required faith in his Divine mission.

§ 57. Ver. 7—13. *The apostles sent forth.*

The commission here given to the twelve apostles is the same which we had more largely in Matt. 10. Hitherto they had heard Christ's doctrine, and seen his miracles; they received, that they might give; had learned, that they might teach: now he began to send them forth. Christ sent them forth by two and two; that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established; that they might strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts, one of another; and might help one another. Christ would thus teach his ministers to associate together, both to give and to receive help.

He commissioned them to attack the devil's kingdom, and empowered them, as a specimen of their breaking his interest in the souls of men by their doctrine, to cast him out of the bodies of those who were possessed. He commanded them not to take provisions along with them, either of victuals or of money; that they might appear, wherever they came, to be poor men, men not of this world, and therefore might the better call people from it to another world. They must go in the readiest plainest dress they could. He pronounces a heavy doom upon those who should reject the gospel they preached. Let them know that they have had a fair offer of life and happiness, but since they have refused it, they cannot expect another. How heinous a sin is unbelief in those who have means of conviction set before them, seeing that a righteous God will render their doom more intolerable than that of Sodom.

Though the apostles were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no secular advantage, yet, in obedience to their Master's order, and in dependence upon his strength, they went out. They preached that men should repent. The great design of all gospel

preachers, and the great tendency of gospel preaching, should be, to bring people to repentance, to a new heart and a new way. They did not amuse people with curious speculations, but told them that they must repent of their sins, and turn to God. The servants of Christ now must go forth preaching in his name, that men everywhere should repent, enforcing their exhortations by the terrors of the law, and the encouraging truths and promises of the gospel. Thus they may hope to turn many from darkness unto God, and to be instruments of healing souls, by the unction of the Holy Ghost.

They used the power Christ gave them over unclean spirits. They anointed with oil many that were sick, as a sign of miraculous healing, by the appointment of Christ: and it was afterwards used by the elders of the church, to whom by the Spirit was given the gift of healing, Jam. 5. 14. It is certain that anointing the sick with oil, was appropriated to an extraordinary power which has long ceased, therefore that sign should have ceased with it.

8. The end of the girdle in eastern dress is folded so as to make a purse.

13. This anointing with oil was only a symbolical action, much in use among the Jews, typifying "the oil of gladness" to be imparted by Divine power. See *Theophylact*. The extreme unction of the Romish church cannot be defended either from this passage or James 5. 14; it is only used when the person anointed is at the point of death, as a passport for his soul

§ 61. 23. 60. Ver. 14—29. *John the baptist put to death.*

Here are notions of the people concerning our Lord Jesus. His own countrymen would believe nothing great concerning him, because they knew his poor kindred; others were willing to believe any thing rather than the truth, that he was the Son of God, the true Messiah.

When Herod heard of Christ, he said, It is certainly John Baptist, whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead; having removed for a while to another world, he is come again with greater power.

A guilty conscience needs no accuser or tormentor but itself; and the terror of it made Herod imagine that Christ was John risen again. He feared John while he lived, and feared him still more when he was dead. Those who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undefiled conscience, Acts 24. 16. There may be terrors of strong conviction, where there is not the truth of saving conversion.

We may observe,

1. The great value and veneration which Herod had for John Baptist, which is related only by this evangelist. Here we see what a great way a man may go toward grace and glory, and yet come short of both, and perish eternally. It is possible that a man may have a great reverence for good men, and especially for good ministers, even for that in them which is good, and yet himself be a bad man. John was a just man, and holy; holiness toward God, and justice toward men, distinguished his character. Holiness and justice command veneration, and many that are not good themselves, have respect for those that are. Herod observed John. He had regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him which was praiseworthy. He did many of those things which John in his preaching taught him. He was not only a hearer of the word, but in part a doer of the work. Some sins which John in his preaching reprov'd he forsook, and some duties he bound himself to; but it will not suffice to do many things, unless we have respect to all the commandments. Herod heard him gladly. He did not hear him with terror as Felix heard Paul, but heard him with pleasure. There is a short-lived joy, which a hypocrite may have in hearing the word. Ezekiel was to his hearers as a lovely song, Ezek. 33. 32; and the stony ground hearers received the word with joy, Luke 8. 13.

2. John's faithfulness to Herod in telling him of his faults. Herod had married his brother Philip's wife. Though it was dangerous to offend Herod, and much more to offend Herodias, yet John would run the hazard, rather than be wanting in his duty. Those ministers who would be found faithful in the work of God, must not be afraid of the face of man. If we seek to please men, further than is for their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.

Herod respected John, till he touched him in his Herodias. Many that pretend to honour prophesying, are for smooth things only; they love good preaching, if it keep far enough from their beloved sin; but if that be touched, they cannot bear it. No marvel if the world hate those who testify that its works are evil. But it is better that sinners persecute ministers now for faithfulness, than curse them eternally for unfaithfulness. The

frame of men's minds is very different when they have been hearing the word of God delivered by a heart-searching preacher, from what it is when they are indulging their appetites, and engaged in luxury, dissipation, and revelry.

We see in this dreadful instance of Herodias, what implacable malice may arise in the hearts of sinners, on being reprov'd for scandalous vices. Instead of owning her obligation to him that would have snatched her as a brand from the burning, she thirsts for his blood! How mysterious the providence that left the life of so holy a man in such hands, and then let it fall as the reward of a dance! The ways of God are unsearchable; but we may be sure he never can be at a loss to repay his servants for what they endure or lose for his sake.—(80.)

We may reasonably conclude that death could not be an unseasonable surprise to this excellent saint. When the executioner entered his prison, and executed his commission almost as soon as he declared it, a soul like his might welcome the stroke as a means of liberty and glory. His death was precious in the sight of the Lord, and the triumphing of the wicked was short.—(80.)

15. He is a prophet resembling one of the prophets of old times.—*Bloomfield.*

21. The coincidence of the circumstances related by *Josephus* respecting Herod, with those recorded in the gospels relative to John the Baptist, is very remarkable. The original word, Luke 3. 14, describing the soldiers who came to John while he was baptizing, shows they were men actually upon a military expedition. Herod was at that very time at war with Aretas, a king of Arabia Petrea, whose daughter he had married, but who had left him in consequence of his taking Herodias, his brother's wife. See note, Matt. 14. The soldiers were a part of his army, at that time on its march from Galilee, through the country where John was baptizing. Herodias accompanied Herod. Her hatred of John is fully accounted for, and she seems to have caused him to be imprisoned, and then during an entertainment given by Herod in the fortress of Machærus, near the place where the Jordan discharges into the Dead Sea, procured an order for his execution, when he was immediately put to death by a soldier of the guard, called an executioner in our version. *T. H. Horne* well observes, that so minute and so latent a coincidence was never discovered in a forgery, nor could any spurious productions bear so rigid a test as those here applied to the gospels of Mark and Luke.

§ 62, 63. Ver. 30—44. *The apostles return—Five thousand miraculously fed.*

The apostles came to Jesus; they told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. Ministers are accountable both for what they do,

and for what they teach, Heb. 13. 17. Let them not either do any thing, or teach any thing, but what they are willing should be related to their Lord.

Christ took care for their repose, ver. 31. It seems that John's disciples came to Christ with the mournful tidings of their master's death, about the same time. Christ takes cognizance of the frights of some, and the toils of others of his disciples, and provides rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. The most active servants of Christ cannot be always upon the stretch of business, they have bodies that require some relaxation. We shall not be able to serve God without ceasing, day and night, till we come to heaven, where they never rest from praising him, Rev. 4. 8. And those that work diligently and faithfully, may cheerfully retire to rest. Christ invites them into a desert place; he had but a desert for his resting place! He calls them only to rest for a while.

The people followed him, without being called upon, quitted their callings and affairs, to hear him preach. They made haste, and came together to him with an appetite to the word of God.

Instead of being moved with displeasure, because they disturbed him when he desired to be private, he looked upon them with concern, because they were as sheep having no shepherd, none to lead and guide them right, none to feed them with good doctrine. Therefore, in compassion to them, he not only healed their sick, but he taught them many things.

They did not say, Send us away, though they could not but be hungry, for they esteemed the words of Christ's mouth more than their necessary food; but the disciples thought it would be kindness to dismiss them. They attended on the spiritual food of his word, and then Christ took care that they should not want bodily food. The way of duty, as it is the way of safety, so it is the way to a supply. Providence, not tempted, but duly trusted, never yet failed any of God's faithful servants, but has refreshed many with seasonable and surprising relief.

Christ said, Give ye them to eat, ver. 37. but the disciples objected against this as impracticable. Through the weakness of their faith, instead of waiting for directions from Christ, they perplex the case with projects of their own. Christ would let them see their folly in forecasting for

themselves, that they might put the greater value upon his provision for them. When others ministered to him of their substance, it was not because he could not supply himself otherwise, if he were hungry, he needed not tell them, but it was a humiliation he was pleased to submit to; nor was it agreeable to the intention of miracles that he should work them for himself.

Observe, their provision was ordinary, five loaves and two fishes; thus he would teach us to be content with food convenient for us, and not to desire dainties. The promise to those who fear the Lord, is, that verily they shall be fed; he does not say, They shall be feasted. If Christ and his disciples took up with mean things, surely we may. The guests sat down by companies, that the provision might more easily and regularly be distributed among them. Thus care was taken that every one should have enough, and none be overlooked, nor any have more than was fitting.

Christ did not call one of his disciples to ask a blessing, but did it himself; and by virtue of this blessing the bread strangely multiplied, and the fishes also, for all did eat, and were filled, though they were to the number of five thousand. This miracle shows that Christ came into the world, not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish spiritual life; and in him there is enough for all that come to him, enough to fill the soul, to fill the treasures. None are sent empty away from Christ but those who come to him full of themselves.

Care was taken of the fragments that remained. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he would hereby teach us not to waste any of God's good creatures, remembering how many there are that want. We may, some time or other, want fragments we throw away.

Those who wait on Christ take the best method of obtaining all things needful, both for soul and body. As he died on the cross that he might feed our souls with the bread of life, he will not fail, in his providence, to give us food for our bodies also. Let us copy his example, in being accessible at all times to such as want our help, in having compassion on the outward afflictions of our neighbours, as well as the lost state of their souls, and in being ready and glad to communicate to them.

33. Or, "knew it."

37. The expression, "two hundred penny worth," is used proverbially to denote a large sum, being frequently the amount of fines among the Jews.—See *Lightfoot*.

§ 64. Ver. 45-56. *Christ walks on the sea—He heals those that touch him.*

Christ constrained his disciples to go before by ship to Bethsaida. The people were loth to depart, so that it cost him some time and pains to send them away. He then departed into a mountain to pray. Though he had so much preaching-work, yet he prayed often, and prayed long. He went alone to pray, to set an example, and encourage secret addresses to God.

The disciples were in distress at sea. The wind was contrary, so that they toiled in rowing, and could not get forward. This was a specimen of the hardships they were to expect when sent abroad to preach the gospel. They must expect to endure toil they must work hard to strive against so strong a stream; they must likewise expect to be tossed with waves, to be persecuted by their enemies. The church is often like a ship at sea, tossed with tempests, and not comforted: we may have Christ for us, yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount, interceding for them.

Christ could have checked the winds where he was, or have sent an angel to their relief; but he chose to help them himself. He did not come till the morning. If Christ's visits to his people are deferred long, yet at length he will come. Though the salvation tarry, yet we must wait for it; at the end it shall speak. The sea was now tossed with waves, and yet Christ came, walking upon it. No difficulties can hinder Christ's gracious appearances for his people, when the set time is come. He seemed as if he would have gone further, and took no notice of them; this he did, to awaken them to call to him. Providence, when acting designedly and directly for the succour of God's people, sometimes seems as if their case was not regarded. They thought that he would, but we may be sure that he would not have passed by them.

They were frightened at the sight of him. We often perplex and frighten ourselves with phantasms, the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. He silenced their fears, by making himself

known to them. We know not Christ till he is pleased to reveal himself to us. It is I; I your Master, I your Friend, I your Redeemer and Saviour. The knowledge of Christ, as he is in himself, and near to us, is enough to make the disciples of Christ cheerful, even in a storm, and no longer fearful. Our fears are soon satisfied, if our mistakes are but rectified, especially our mistakes concerning Christ. He does not tell them who he was; they knew his voice. When Christ said to those that came to take him by force, "I am he," they were struck down by it, John 18.6. When he saith to those that take hold upon him by faith, I am he, they are raised up by it, and comforted. He went to them into the ship, and so made them perfectly easy. Let them but have their Master with them, and all is well. Though we hear not the command given, yet, if the wind cease, and we have the comfort of a calm, say, It is because Christ is in the ship, and his decree is gone forth. When we come with Christ to heaven, the wind ceases; no storms are there.

They were sore amazed in themselves, as if Christ had never done the like before, and they had no reason to expect he should do it now. They ought to have admired the power of Christ, and to have been confirmed hereby in their belief of his being the Son of God. But this confusion about it, was because they considered not the miracle of the loaves. Had they rightly considered that, they would not have been so much surprised at this. Christ's multiplying the bread was as great an instance of his power as his walking on the water. It is for want of rightly understanding Christ's former works, that we view his present works as if there never were the like before.

When they came to the land of Genesareth, between Bethsaida and Capernaum, the people bid them welcome; but we do not find that they were desirous to be taught by Christ, only to be healed. If Christ's ministers now could cure people's bodily diseases, what multitudes would attend them! It is sad to think how much more concerned most are about their bodies than about their souls. But there is a duty of love and mercy which we owe to all those that are in affliction or misery, to afford them the best help and relief we are able, both in their inward and outward troubles.—(73.)

This gospel was written by Mark, it is believed, under the direction of the apostle Peter; and we find, in this and other instances, particulars omitted which would place that apostle in a distinguished light. See Matt. 14. 28—31.

## CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—31.

M. 15. 1—29.

§ 66. Ver. 1—13. *The traditions of the elders.*

One great design of Christ's coming was, to set aside the ceremonial law, to make way for which, he begins with the ceremonies that men had added to the law of God's making.

We have here an account of the practices of the pharisees and all the Jews. 1. They washed their hands oft. Some make it to denote the frequency of their washing; others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands; they washed with great care up to their elbows. 2. They particularly washed before they ate bread; that is, before they sat down to a solemn meal; for their rule was as follows: "Whosoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, 'Blessed be he that produceth bread,' must wash his hands before and after;" or else he was thought to be defiled. 3. They took special care to wash when they came in from any place of concourse, where there were people of all sorts; and, it might be supposed, some heathen or Jews under a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted. 4. They added to this the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, which had been used by heathens, or persons polluted; nay, and the very tables. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed; but they added to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions as much as of God's institutions.

Christ's disciples knew what the law was, and the common usage. The pharisees had their eyes upon them, and yet they would not comply with the tradition of the elders, but took their liberty as at other times. But those clean hands, and that pure heart which Christ bestows on his disciples, and requires of them, are very different from the outward and superstitious forms which have been urged by pharisees in every age.

The pharisees censured the disciples as profane, and brought a complaint to their Master, as if he countenanced them. In Christ's vindication he argues with the pharisees concerning the authority by

which this ceremony was imposed. He reproves them for hypocrisy in pretending to honour God, when really they had no such design in their religious observances. Hereproves them for placing religion in the inventions and injunctions of their elders and rulers. It was true, there were divers washings imposed by the law of Moses, Heb. 9. 10, intended to signify that inward purification of the heart from worldly, fleshly lusts, which God requires as absolutely necessary to our communion with him; but, instead of attending to the substance, they presumptuously added to the ceremony, and were very nice in washing pots and cups, and many other such like things. Jesus reproves them for laying aside the commandment of God, and not urging that in their preaching. Nay, they rejected the commandment of God. This he gives them a particular instance of. God commanded children to honour their parents. Hence it is clear that it is the duty of children, if their parents are poor, to relieve them, according to their ability; and if those children are worthy to die that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man would conform to their traditions, they found an expedient by which he might be discharged from this obligation.

By the corban both property and persons became devoted to God, and what had been once thus appropriated could never after be put to any other use. But the law of tradition had perverted it to abuses, affixing a superstitious value to the mere pronouncing of the words, "It is a gift." And of whatever that was said, it became restricted from its proper use and purpose, yet not necessarily appropriated to the service of God. Thus if a son, whether in heat or deliberately, said it of his property, though nothing became consecrated to God, every thing was tied up from his parents; he was considered as guilty of impiety if he ever after turned his means and opportunities to their benefit, and was as liable to censures for services rendered them, as if he had applied a real corban to any profane use.—(84.)

3. Various explanations are given of the word here translated "oft;" they mostly imply diligent care in washing. *Doddridge* paraphrases it, "With abundance of exactness." So strict were the pharisees in this respect, that the Talmud tells of a rabbi, who, being confined in prison with a small allowance of water, and having split a part, chose rather to die of thirst than to omit washing his hands with the remainder. The Mohammedans are very scrupulous in these mat-

ters at the present day, as are other eastern people.

4. Brazen or copper vessels; those of earthenware were broken when defiled. The word rendered tables means beds, see margin or couches like our sofas, see *Bloomfield*. The Jews had many ceremonial rules for washing these articles in various ways, see *Gill*. Mark, writing for Gentiles as well as Jews, notices or explains many national customs.

11—13. *Capellus* has shown, by a number of extracts from the Talmud, that the sense here given in the comment is the correct view of the passage in which *Doddridge*, and most other able commentators, agree. *Campbell* renders ver. 11—13 thus: "But ye maintain. If a man say to father or mother, 'Be it corban (that is, devoted) whatever of mine shall profit thee;' he must not thenceforth do ought for his father or his mother; thus invalidating the word of God by the tradition which ye have established." In short, it was an excuse, under the guise of religion, to let a parent be in the extremity of want.

§ 66. Ver. 14—23. *What defiles the man.*

Corrupt customs are best cured by rectifying corrupt notions. Christ shows what the pollution is we are in danger of being injured by. Our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, defile us, and these only. Our care must therefore be, to wash our heart from wickedness. He gave his disciples, in private, an explanation of the instructions he gave the people. He reproves their dulness. He does not expect they should understand every thing; "But are ye so weak as not to understand this?" If we understand the spiritual nature of God and of his law, and what unfits us for communion with him, we shall soon perceive that what comes out from the heart, the corrupt heart, defiles us. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them. Divers particulars are specified, as in Matt. 15. Of all these Jesus concludes, 1. That they come from within, from the corrupt nature, the carnal mind, the evil treasure in the heart; justly is it said, that the inward part is very wickedness; it must be so, when all this comes from within. 2. That they defile the man; they render a man unfit for communion with God, they bring a stain upon the conscience, and, if not mortified and rooted out, will shut men out of the new Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing shall enter.

A spiritual understanding of the law of God, and a sense of the evil of sin, will cause a man to seek for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to repress the

evil imaginations and affections that work within. As he is made partaker of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, his great object will be to increase therein daily, as a proof that the guilt is removed from his conscience by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

† 67. Ver. 24—30. *The woman of Canaan's daughter cured.*

Christ went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and there entered, not into a synagogue, or place of concourse, but into a private house, and he would have no man know it. Not but that he was willing to preach and heal there as well as in other places, but for this he would be sought unto. Observe,

The application made to him by a poor woman in trouble. She was a Gentile, a Greek, not in any degree proselyted to the Jewish religion; she had a daughter, a young daughter, that was possessed with a devil. How many and grievous are the calamities that young children are subject to! Her address was very humble, pressing, and importunate. Christ never put any from him that fell at his feet, which a poor trembling soul may do, that has not boldness and confidence to throw itself into his arms. It was her daughter that was tormented, yet she says, "Have mercy upon me." Perhaps the possessed child was senseless of her misery; the parent feels both its sorrow and her own. As she was a good woman, so a good mother. This sent her to Christ, it was this that must incline Christ to her.—(34.)

He discouraged her address. Christ sometimes tries the faith of poor supplicants. But his saying, Let the children first be filled, intimates that there was mercy in reserve for the Gentiles, and not far off; for the Jews began already to be surfeited with the gospel of Christ, and some of them had desired him to depart out of their coasts. The apostles went by this rule, Let the children first be filled, let the Jews have the first offer; and if their full souls loath this honeycomb, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles! Acts 13. 46.

She spoke, not as undervaluing the mercy, or making light of it in itself, but magnifying the abundance of miraculous cures with which she heard the Jews were boasted, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Is she thus humbled, thus earnest? For this saying, Go thy way, thou shalt have what

thou camest for; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. This encourages us to pray and not to faint, to continue instant in prayer, not doubting but to prevail at last. Christ's saying that it was done, did it effectually, as at other times his saying, Let it be done; for she came to her house, depending upon the word of Christ, that her daughter was healed, and so she found it, the devil was gone out. Christ can conquer Satan at a distance; and it was not only when the demoniacs saw him, that they yielded to his power, but when they saw him not, for the Spirit of the Lord is not bounded. She found her daughter not in any agitation, but quietly laid on the bed.

Thus, while proud pharisees are left by the blessed Saviour, he manifests his compassion to poor humble sinners, and all who allow themselves to be unworthy of the crumbs that fall from his table, may look to him for children's bread. He still goes about to seek and save the lost, and nothing can prevent the discoveries of his glory and grace. In like manner it is our business to persevere in doing good without ostentation, and our labour of love will not be lost.

† 68. Ver. 31—37. *Christ restores a man to hearing and speech.*

Here we have a cure Christ wrought, which is not recorded by the other evangelists; it is of one that was deaf and dumb. His case was sad: he had not the satisfaction either of hearing other people, or of telling his own mind. Let us give thanks to God for preserving to us the sense of hearing, especially that we may be capable of hearing the word of God; and the faculty of speech, especially that we may be capable of speaking God's praises; and let us look with compassion upon those that are deaf or dumb, and treat them with great tenderness. Those who brought this poor man to Christ, besought him to put his hand upon him, to observe the case, and put forth his power as he pleased.

The cure was solemn, and some of the circumstances were singular. Christ took the man aside from the multitude. Ordinarily, he wrought his miracles publicly before all the people, to show that they would bear the strictest scrutiny and inspection; but this he did privately, showing that he did not seek his own glory, and teaching us to avoid every thing that savours of ostentation. Let us learn of

Christ to be humble, and to do good where no human eye sees us.

Our Lord used more significant actions in the doing of this cure than usual. These were not causes that could in the least contribute to the cure, but only signs of the exerting that power which Christ had in himself to cure the man, for the encouragement of his faith, and theirs that brought him. The application was all from himself, for he alone heals. He looked up to heaven. Thus he signified that it was by a Divine power, a power he had as the Lord from heaven, and brought from thence, that he did this cure. He sighed; not as if he found any difficulty in working this miracle, or in obtaining power from his Father; but thus he expressed pity for the miseries of human life, and sympathy with the afflicted in their afflictions, as himself touched with the feeling of their infirmities.

Christ said, Ephphatha; that is, Be opened. He spake as one having authority, and power went along with the word, and the effect was answerable; and happy was he who, as soon as he had his hearing and speech, had the blessed Jesus so near him, to converse with. Now this cure was a proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for it was foretold that by his power the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb should be made to sing, Isa. 35. 5, 6. It was also a specimen of the operations of the gospel upon the minds of men.

Christ ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very public. He would thus set us an example of self-denial, especially as to the praise and applause of men. We should take pleasure in doing good, but not in its being known. It was their zeal that published it. How far the friends acted aright, or the contrary, we need not determine. But they that told it, and they that heard it, were beyond measure astonished; they were exceedingly affected with it.

Though we find great variety in the cases and manner of relief of those who applied to Christ, yet in one way or another all obtained the relief they sought. Thus it still is in the great concerns of our souls. The compassionate Saviour still opens the deaf ear, and looses the stammering tongue. When he speaks with authority, he opens the understanding and the heart to receive instruction, and the lips to show forth his praise.

33. Why our Lord on this occasion used an outward sign, it is impossible for us to know; we must conclude that many of his motives are not imparted to us. *Doddridge* well observes, "Wherever we are sure that any observance whatever is appointed by Christ, we are humbly to submit. Had Christ's patients, like Naaman, been too nice in their exceptions on these occasions, I fear they would have lost their cure; the indulgence of a curious or petulant mind would have been a poor equivalent for such a loss."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1-10. M. 15. 32-39.  
Ver. 11-21. M. 16. 1-11.  
Ver. 27-29. M. 16. 13-16. L. 9. 18-20.  
Ver. 30-38. M. 16. 30-37. L. 9. 21-26.  
§ 69. Ver. 1-10. *Four thousand miraculously fed.*

Our Lord Jesus was greatly followed, notwithstanding the wicked arts of the scribes and pharisees. He encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace. Those who were true disciples, underwent great difficulties in following him. True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. As Christ has compassion for all who are in want and in straits, so he has special concern for those that are brought into difficulties by zeal and diligence in attending on him. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith, ver. 3, If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for hunger. Christ knows and considers our frames. He considered that many of them came from far, and had a great way to go home. When we see multitudes attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not, and it is not his manner to send those empty away from him who in a right manner attend on him.

The doubts of christians are sometimes made to work for magnifying the power of Christ. The disciples then could not imagine whence so many men should be satisfied with bread in that wilderness. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible; to evidence that, Christ repeated this miracle, to show that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. In our Father's house, in our Master's house, there is bread enough, and to spare; there is a fulness in Christ, which he communicates to all which passes through his hands; so that from it we receive, and grace for grace, John 1. 16. Those need not fear wanting who have Christ to live upon. These followers of



Christ continued in a body, four thousand of them together, and Christ fed them all. Christ's sheep must abide by the flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

§ 70, 71. Ver. 11—21. *Christ cautions against the Pharisees and Herodians.*

Christ refused to gratify the pharisees. They demanded a sign from heaven, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and more easy to be examined and inquired into, were not sufficient. Obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though ever so unreasonable.

He sighed deeply in his spirit. He groaned, so some, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. The infidelity of those who have long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. He expostulates with them upon their demand, Why doth this generation seek after a sign; this generation, that is so unworthy to have the gospel brought to it; this generation that so greedily swallows the tradition of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all; this generation, into which, by calculating the times already set down in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive that the coming of the Messiah must fall; this generation, that has had such very plain and merciful signs given them in the cure of their sick? He refuses to answer their demand. When God spake to particular persons in a particular case, out of the course of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks in general to all, as in the law and gospel, sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. If they will not be convinced, they shall not; they shall be left to their strong delusions. Alas! what cause we have to lament for those around us, who destroy themselves and others by their perverse and obstinate unbelief, and enmity to the gospel.

He cautioned his disciples, "Take heed, beware, lest ye partake of the leaven of the pharisees, lest ye be proud, and hypocritical, like them." Matthew adds, "and of the sadducees;" Mark adds, "and of Herod;" whence some gather that Herod and his courtiers were generally saddu-

cees, or men of no religion. The disciples misunderstood this caution, as an intimation to them, not to apply to any of the pharisees for relief. They reasoned, they disputed about it. Thus the distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

Observe, the reproof Christ gave them for their uneasiness in this matter; as it argued disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the abundant experience they had received of it. Justly were they rebuked for not understanding what Christ designed, and what they from thence might have learned. The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him. Our not understanding the true intent of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering them. When we thus forget the works of God, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ here reproves his disciples. How is it that our hearts are thus hardened? How is it that we do not more clearly understand the glory of his truths, the privileges of his kingdom, the security of his word, and the spiritual nature of his precepts? How is it that we so often mistake his meaning, disregard his warnings, and distrust his Providence?—These things arise from the remains of the same leaven which wholly prevails in the hearts of unbelievers. Let us watch against it, and earnestly pray, that we may perceive, hear, and remember his word, and be thankful for all his kindness towards us.

§ 72. Ver. 22—26. *A blind man healed.*

Here is a blind man brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him. Therein appeared the faith of those that brought him. If those who are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

Here is Christ leading this blind man. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him out of the town. He thereby upbraided Bethsaida with the mighty works that had in vain been done in her, Matt. 11. 21, and told the inhabitants in effect, that they were unworthy to have any more done within their walls.

In this cure we may observe, First, That Christ used a sign; he spat upon the man's eyes, and put his hand upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word, but he often works by means

which are no more than outward signs of his powerful operation. Second, That the cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He asked him if he saw aught. Let him tell what condition his sight was in. And he looked up; he recovered his sight so far that he could open his eyes, and see imperfectly. Third, It was soon completed; Christ never leaves his work unfinished. He put his hands again upon the man's eyes, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he saw every man clearly. Observe, 1. Christ would not confine himself to one method, but showed with what liberty he acted in all he did. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with implicit faith. 2. It should be to the patient according to his faith; perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Thus Christ would sometimes rebuke those who came to him, doubting. 3. Christ showed in what method those commonly are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind. At first, their knowledge is confused, they see men as trees walking; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly, Prov. 4. 18. Let us inquire then, if we see aught of those things which faith is the substance and evidence of; and if through grace we see any thing of them, we may hope that we shall yet see more and more, for Jesus Christ will perfect for ever those that are sanctified.

Christ directed the man he had cured not to tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida, nor so much as to go into that town. Let not those be gratified with the sight of the man when cured, who would not go out of the town to see this cure wrought. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; he will make those know the worth of privileges by the want of them, who would not know it otherwise.

173, 74. Ver. 27—33. *Peter's testimony to Christ.*

We have read a great deal of the doctrine Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought. What shall we think of them? Is the record only for our amusement? No, these things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, John 20. 31; and this discourse which Christ had with his disciples,

will assist us in making the necessary reflections upon the miracles of Christ.

1. They prove that he is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; and this his disciples, who were eye-witnesses of those works, here profess to believe. Christ inquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him; that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

The account they gave plainly intimated the high opinion the people had of him; and their own sentiments concerning him, intimated their abundant satisfaction in him, and in having left all to follow him. Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, often promised, and long expected. To be a christian indeed, is sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain; but for the present they must keep it secret, till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it, by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. Then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts 2. 36.

2. These miracles of Christ take off the offence of the cross, and assure us that Christ was not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, of which Christ here begins to give them notice.

Though they had got over the error of the Messiah being a temporal Prince, so far as to believe their Master to be the true Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they expected that he would shortly appear in outward grandeur, and restore the kingdom to Israel. To correct that mistake, Christ here gives them warning of the contrary; that he must be rejected, and that, instead of being crowned, he must be killed, he must be crucified, and after three days he must rise again to a heavenly life, and to be no more in this world. This he spake openly. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in doubtful expressions; he spoke cheerfully and without any terror, and would have them hear it so: he spake that saying boldly, as one who not only knew he must suffer and die, but was resolved, and made it his own act and deed.

Peter showed more love than discretion;

a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not according to knowledge. His was the language of affection, of jealousy for the welfare of those we love. Christ turned about, as one offended, and looked on his disciples, to see if the rest of them were of the same mind, that, if they were, they might also take the reproof to themselves. Peter perhaps then expected as much commendation for his love as he had lately had for his faith. Christ sees that amiss in what we say and do, of which we ourselves are not aware, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not. Peter spake as one that did not rightly understand, nor duly consider the purposes and counsels of God. When he saw such proofs every day of the power of Christ, he might conclude that his master could not be compelled to suffer; he might conclude that his Lord would not choose to suffer but for some great and glorious purposes; but he looked upon Christ's death only as a martyrdom like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if he would not provoke the chief priests, or would keep out of the way. He knew not that it was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and so must bring many sons to glory. The wisdom of man is folly, when it pretends to limit the Divine counsels. The cross of Christ, the greatest instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, to others foolishness. Peter did not rightly understand the nature of Christ's kingdom; he took it to be temporal and human, whereas it is spiritual and Divine. Minding the things of men more than the things of God, our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the things of God, and his glory and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; it will appear in suffering times, times of temptation, when those fall off in whom the things of men have the ascendancy.

§ 74. Ver. 34—38. *Christ must be followed.*

The miracles of Christ should engage all to follow him, whatever it cost us. They not only confirmed his mission, but were explications of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating that by his Spirit he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, diseased, possessed souls, which he did for the bodies of those who

in their distresses applied to him. Frequent notice is taken of the great flocking there was to him for help in various cases; he is the great Physician of souls, we may become his patients, and here he tells upon what terms they may be admitted; and he called all the people to him, to hear this. All are concerned to know this, and consider, if they expect Christ to heal their souls.

They must not indulge the ease of the body. They must not be solicitous, even for the life of the body, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ. Did we truly consider the worth and danger of our precious souls, for which no ransom could be found but the blood of Emmanuel, we should count the whole world contemptible, if the gain of it endangered our souls. True it is, said bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, that life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet. As the happiness of heaven with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world in sin, will not countervail the ruin of the soul by sin.

Yet there are many, who, though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, are ashamed of it, because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are ashamed of their relation to Christ, and ashamed of the credit they cannot but give to his words; they cannot bear to be frowned upon and despised, therefore throw off their profession, and go down the stream of prevailing apostasy. But there is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible to some; when the Son of man comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels, as the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the Lord of angels. Those who are ashamed of Christ in this world where he is despised, he will be ashamed of in the world where he is eternally adored. Those shall not share with him in his glory then, who are not willing to share with him in his disgrace now. May we continually think of that season, and estimate every earthly object as we shall do at that important day.

36, 37. The word here rendered soul is the same as is rendered life in the preceding verses, and in parallel passages. See Scholefield, who refers to Job 3. 4, as an illustration of the sentiment.—Also Campbell. This seems to be a proverbial expression, transferred from temporal to

spiritual application, as, "If we think an earthly and temporal life cheaply bought, at whatever price, how much more a heavenly and eternal one!"—*Bloomfield*. See Matt. 16. 26; Luke 9. 35.

## CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1.	M. 16. 28.	L. 3. 27.
Ver. 9-10.	M. 17. 1-9.	L. 9. 28-36.
Ver. 11-13.	M. 17. 10-12.	
Ver. 14-33.	M. 17. 14-24.	L. 9. 37-45.
Ver. 33-40.	M. 18. 1-5.	L. 9. 46-50.
Ver. 42-48.	M. 18. 6-9.	

§ 75. Ver. 1-13. *The transfiguration.*

Here is a prediction of Christ's kingdom near approaching. This was the restoring of the kingdom of God among men, which had been in a manner lost by the degeneracy both of Jews and Gentiles. It would come with power, so as to bear down the opposition that was given to it. It came with power, when vengeance was taken on the Jews for crucifying Christ, and when it conquered the idolatry of the Gentile world. It would come while some now present were alive. Those who were standing there with Christ should see it, when others could not discern it to be the kingdom of God, for it came not with observation.

A specimen of that kingdom was given in the transfiguration of Christ, six days after Christ spake the prediction. He had begun to give notice to his disciples of his death and sufferings; and to prevent their offence at that, he gives them this glimpse of his glory, to show that his sufferings were voluntary. Christ did not take all the disciples with him. As there are distinguishing favours which are given to disciples, and not to the world, so there are to some disciples, and not to others. He was transfigured before them; he appeared in another manner than he used to do, the substance remaining the same, and it was a miracle. He was transfigured before them; the disciples, who had their eyes upon him all the while, had certain evidence that this glorious appearance was no other than the blessed Jesus himself.

His companions in this glory were Moses and Elias. They appeared talking with him, to testify to him. The great delight the disciples took in seeing this glorious sight, and hearing this discourse, is expressed by Peter. Gracious souls reckon it good to be in communion with Christ, good to be near him, good to be on the mount with him, though it be in a cold and solitary place. It is good

to be retired from the world, and alone with Christ: and how good to be with Christ glorified in heaven with all the saints! But observe, while Peter was for staying there, he forgot what need there was of the presence of Christ, and the preaching of his apostles, among the people. At this very time, the other disciples wanted them greatly. When it is well with us, we are apt to be mindless of others, and in the fulness of our enjoyments forget the necessities of our brethren. It was weakness in Peter to prefer private communion with God before public usefulness. Paul is willing to abide in the flesh, when he sees it needful for the church, rather than depart to the mountain of glory, though that is far better, Phil. 1. 24, 25. Peter talked of making three distinct tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and Christ; but such a perfect harmony there is between the law, the prophets, and the gospel, that one tabernacle will hold them all; they dwell together in unity.

The voice that came from heaven was an attestation of Christ's mediatorship. God owns him, and accepts him, as his beloved Son, and is ready to accept of us in him. We must then own and accept him as our beloved Saviour, and must give up ourselves to be ruled by him.

Suddenly, when they had looked round about, as men amazed, all was gone, and Jesus remained with them as he used to be. Christ does not leave the soul, when extraordinary joys and comforts leave it. Though more sensible and glorious communions may be withdrawn, Christ's disciples have, and shall have his ordinary presence with them always, even to the end of the world, and that is what we must depend upon. Let us thank God for daily bread, and not expect a continual feast on this side heaven. Christ charged them to keep this matter very private, till he was risen from the dead, which would complete the proof of his Divine mission, and then this must be produced with the rest of the evidence. And besides, he, being now in a state of humiliation, would have nothing publicly taken notice of, that might seem different from such a state. Enjoining silence to the disciples would likewise prevent their boasting of the intimacy they were admitted to.

The disciples thought that the rising Christ spoke of was figurative, his rising from his present mean and low estate, to

the dignity and dominion they were in expectation of. But if so, Why say the scribes; that before the appearing of the Messiah in his glory, according to the order settled in the prophecies of the Old Testament, Elias must first come? What raised this difficulty, was, that the scribes taught them to expect the person of Elias, whereas the prophecy intended one in the spirit and power of Elias. The misunderstanding of scripture is great prejudice to receiving the truth.

Christ gave them to understand the prophecy concerning Elias. As to Elias, I tell you he is come; and if you consider, it is one to whom they have done whatsoever they listed; this was very applicable to the ill usage of John Baptist. He is come, and hath done according as was written of him.

They will be highly favoured who shall hereafter behold the kingdom of God come with power, and set up in all parts of the world; but though we taste of death before those happy days arrive, we shall possess still greater happiness, if admitted into those regions where Jesus displays greater glories than on the mount of transfiguration. In this hope we may cheerfully pass through life and death; though often under a cloud, and are ready to question what the meaning of God's words and appointments can be.

1. The first verse of this chapter should form a part of the preceding.

5. The temporary sheds or booths made of the branches of trees by travellers, or such as were used at the feast of tabernacles.

§ 76. Ver. 14—29. *An evil spirit cast out.*

Christ's return to his disciples was very seasonable, for the scribes had gained an advantage against them. Thus Moses, when he came down from the mount, found the camp of Israel in great disorder; so soon were Christ and Moses missed. One of the multitude then addressed him in behalf of his son, who was possessed with an evil spirit, which produced most deplorable effects.

He rebuked them all. We never hear Christ complaining, How long shall I be in this low condition, and suffer that? But, How long shall I be among these faithless people, and suffer them? The disease came to this young man when a child, which made the case more sad, and the cure more hopeless. We are all by nature children of disobedience, in such the evil spirit works, and has done so from childhood; for foolishness is bound in the

heart of a child, nothing but the almighty grace of Christ can cast it out.

The father of the sufferer reflected on the want of power in the disciples; but Christ will have him impute the disappointment to the want of faith. He graciously encourages the strength of his desire. All things are possible, will appear possible to him that believes the almighty power of God; or, that which seemed utterly impossible, shall be done by the grace of God, for those who believe in the promise of God. Very much is promised to our believing. Canst thou believe? Darest thou believe? Art thou willing to venture thy all in the hands of Christ?—to venture all thy spiritual concerns with him, and all thy temporal concerns for him? Canst thou find in thy heart to do this? If thou canst believe, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and that, weak as thou art, thou mayest be able to hold out to the end.

The poor man, feeling a vehement struggle in his own mind between faith and unbelief, cried out, Lord, I believe; I am fully persuaded both of thy power and of thy pity. He adds a prayer for grace to enable him more firmly to rely upon the ability and willingness of Christ to save; Help thou my unbelief. Even those who through grace can say, Lord, I believe, have reason to complain of their unbelief; that they cannot so readily apply the word of Christ to their own cases as they should, nor so cheerfully depend upon it. Those that complain of unbelief, must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and his grace will be sufficient for them. Help mine unbelief, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it.

Christ saw the people running together, and kept them in suspense no longer, but rebuked the unclean spirit. Observe the charge which Christ gave to it. Let him not only be brought out of this state, but let not the evil spirit ever return. Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually. Satan may go out himself, and yet recover possession; but if Christ cast him out, he will keep him out. The unclean spirit cried, and rent him sore; so loth was he to quit his hold, so exasperated at the superior power of Christ, so malicious to the child, and desirous to kill him. Satan is reluctant to be driven from those that have been long his slaves, and when he

cannot deceive or destroy the sinner, he will cause him all the terror that he can; so that when a man is about to experience a blessed deliverance, he is often more harassed than at any other time; and the beginning of liberty seems like the agonies of death. Jesus took him by the hand, he arose and recovered, and all was well.

Christ told the disciples the reason why they could not cast out this devil. This kind can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting. Whatever other difference there really might be, none appears between this and other kinds, but that the unclean spirit had possession of this poor patient from a child, and that strengthened his interest, and confirmed his hold. And when vicious habits are rooted by long usage, like chronical diseases, they are hard to cure. The disciples must not think to do their work always with the same ease; some services call them to take more than ordinary pains: but Christ can do that with a word's speaking, which they must prevail to do by prayer and fasting. Ministers would be instruments of more remarkable conversions, if they were more strong in faith, more fervent in prayer, and mortified to earthly pleasures and pursuits.

§ 77, 78, 79. Ver. 30—40. *The apostles reproved for contending who should be the greatest.*

Because Christ had done many mighty and good works in Galilee in vain, they shall not be invited to have the benefit of them, as they have been. The time of his sufferings drew nigh, therefore he was willing to converse only with his disciples, to prepare them for the approaching trial. He said to them, The Son of man is delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God into the hands of men, and they shall kill him. Had he been delivered into the hands of devils, and they had done this, it had not been so strange; but that men, who have reason, and should have love—that they should be thus injurious to the Son of man, who came to redeem and save them, is indeed wonderful. Still it is observable that when Christ spake of his death, he always spake of his resurrection, which took away the reproach of it from himself, and should have taken away the grief of it from his disciples. The words were plain enough, but they supposed them to have some mystical meaning which they did not understand, and they were afraid to

ask him. Many remain ignorant because they are ashamed to inquire. Alas, that while the Saviour teaches so plainly the things which belong to his love and grace, men are so blinded by their prejudices that they understand not his sayings.

When Christ came to Capernaum, he asked his disciples about what they disputed among themselves by the way. He would have them confess their fault and folly in it. We must all expect to be called to account by our Lord Jesus, concerning what passes while we are in the way, in this state of passage and probation. We must, in particular, be called to account about our discourses, and especially we shall be called to give account about our disputes. Christ will be sure to reckon with his disciples for disputes about superiority. Nothing could be more contrary to the two great laws of Christ's kingdom, humility and love, than desiring preferment in the world, and disputing about it.

Those who are most humble and self-denying, most resemble Christ, and shall be most tenderly owned by him. This he taught them by a sign. He took a child in his arms, that had nothing of pride and ambition in it. Look you, saith he; whosoever shall receive one like this child, receives me.

Our Lord's declaration reminded John of what he and his brethren had done. They had met with a person who actually was able to cast out devils in the name of Jesus. It should seem that he used that name; believing him to be the Christ, as the apostles did. And why might not he receive that power from Christ, whose Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth, without such an outward call as the apostles had? But as he did not stately follow with them, and was not regularly sent forth as the apostles, and the other seventy disciples, they forbade him to proceed. This was the result of wrong apprehensions. Had not Christ really favoured and helped the man, he could not have succeeded; thus it was wrong to forbid him without asking their Lord's advice. Many have been ready to follow the disciples in this part of their conduct, ready to silence men who have successfully preached to sinners repentance in Christ's name, because they followed not with them. Our Lord blamed the apostles, reminding them that he who wrought miracles in his name would not be very

likely to injure his cause, and that, instead of rejecting those who evidently were their friends, he would certainly recompense every one that so much as gave them a cup of cold water, because they belonged to him, the promised Messiah. If sinners are brought to repent, to believe in the Saviour, and to live sober, righteous, and godly lives, we must perceive the Lord works by the preacher. As to the great controversy between Christ and Beelzebub, He said, He that is not with me is against me, Matt. 12. 30. He that will not own Christ, owns Satan. But among those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances—that follow him, though not with us, we must reckon that though these differ from us, they are not against us, therefore are on our part, and we must not hinder their usefulness.

33. On comparing this passage with Matt. 18. some variations will be observed, which arise from the evangelists each dwelling upon some different points in this dispute. *Michaelis* remarks that some of the disciples, probably Peter, James, and John, claimed the title of greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and these would be ashamed and unwilling to speak, when questioned, while the others would be ready to call their Master's attention to the subject, as stated by Matthew.

§ 79. Ver. 41—50. *Pain to be preferred to sin.*

These solemn warnings seem especially to relate to the ambition and carnal expectations of the apostles. Evil propensities must be mortified and cut off, in order to their entering into life, however painful it might be. The expressions here are more strong and varied than in the parallel passages. They illustrate the supposed value of the sacrifices to be made, and the resolution, self-denial, and wisdom required to make them.

It is repeatedly said of the wicked, Their worm dieth not, as well as, The fire is never quenched. Doubtless, remorse of conscience and keen self-reflection constitute this never-dying worm, so that it contradicts any ideas of ceasing to exist, or of being at last brought to happiness. In either case their worm would die, and their torturing consciousness cease.

The sacrifices under the law were salted; this was an emblem of Divine grace which renders the sanctified soul meet for the enjoyment of its incorruptible inheritance; it also represented that the nature of the punishment would render the heirs of hell incorruptible, their misery would be as endless as the happiness of the righteous.

In conclusion, our Lord reminded his disciples, that as salt, though valuable to

preserve other bodies, was worthless when it had lost its saltiness, so they would become more vile than others if not truly sanctified. It was, therefore, especially needful for them to look to their own hearts, and mortify their lusts. Surely it is infinitely better to undergo all possible pain, hardship, and self-denial here, and to be happy for ever hereafter, than to enjoy all kinds of worldly pleasure for a season, and to be miserable for ever! If the difficulty and pain of mortifying lusts, and subduing bad habits, appear very great, if what is to be renounced appear very valuable, consider the awful alternative! Either as sacrifices to God's justice to be salted with fire, or to be willing living sacrifices to his honour, by sanctification of the Spirit of Christ, through the redemption of his blood. Let us look diligently that none of us fail of the grace of God, let us follow after peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Our chief concern is, to present ourselves living sacrifices to our Lord and God, Rom. 12. 1; and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be salted with salt, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Those that have the salt of grace, must show they have it; that they have salt in themselves, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out corrupt dispositions in the soul which would offend our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our speech must be always with grace seasoned with this salt, that no corrupt communication may proceed out of our mouth, but we may loathe it. Let us, knowing this terror of the Lord, be persuaded to do so.

Blessed Jesus, thou bringest good tidings; yet which of the prophets under the law, ever represented the terrors of the Lord in so awful a light as that in which thou hast placed them? May we all be effectually warned to flee from the wrath to come; and as we would not another day be salted with fire, may our hearts now be seasoned with thy grace.—(80.)

45. *Whitby* shows that the eternity of the torments of hell is not only the constant faith of the christian church, but has always been so of the Jewish church. *Josephus* says, The pharisees held that the souls of the wicked were to be punished with perpetual punishment; and that there was appointed a perpetual prison for them. And *Philo* says, The punishment of the wicked is to live for ever dying, and to be for ever in pains and griefs that never cease.—*From Henry.*

49. *Bez,* and other commentators, consider the meaning to be, "Every christian is purified (or tried) by fiery trials of life, as every sacrifice is salted with salt." Some consider it means, that the wicked shall be preserved for and in everlasting punishment, and believers shall be seasoned with the salt of grace. Or, that as every sacrifice under the law was salted with salt, to purify and make it holy; so every one that is to be saved, shall be salted, purified, or have their consciences purged from dead works with fire, or the Holy Ghost. See *Ostervald*. It is one of the most difficult passages in the N. T. but no doctrinal point is involved in the differing views given of it.

## CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1-12. M. 19. 1-9. L. 18. 15-30.  
Ver. 13-31. M. 19. 13-30. L. 18. 31-33.  
Ver. 32-34. M. 20. 17-19. L. 18. 31-33.  
Ver. 35-45. M. 20. 20-28.  
Ver. 46-52. M. 20. 29-34. L. 18. 35-43.

§ 103. Ver. 1-12. *The pharisees' question concerning divorce.*

Christ was in the coasts of Judea, by the further side of Jordan, eastward, as not long before, in the utmost borders westward, near Tyre and Sidon. Thus was his circuit like that of the sun, from whose light and heat nothing is hid. Wherever he was, the people flocked after him in crowds; they came to him again, and, as he was wont, he taught them again. Preaching was Christ's constant practice.

Here is a question the pharisees asked concerning divorce. This was a good question, if it had been put with a humble desire to know the mind of God in this matter; but they proposed it, seeking occasion against Christ. Ministers must stand upon their guard, lest, under pretence of being advised with, they be ensnared. In the answer that Christ gave, he abode by the doctrine he had formerly laid down, Matt. 5. 32. He here shows that the reason why Moses, in his law, permitted divorce, was such that they ought not to make use of the permission; for it was only for the hardness of their hearts; while the account which Moses gives of the institution of marriage, affords such a reason against divorce, as amounts to a prohibition of it. The union is the most intimate that can be, a sacred thing that must not be violated. God himself joined man and wife together; he has not only, as Creator, fitted them to be comforts and helps for each other, but he has, in wisdom and goodness, appointed those who are thus joined together, to live together in love till death parts them. Mar-

riage is not an invention of men, but a Divine institution, therefore it is to be religiously observed, and the rather, because it is a figure of the mystical, inseparable union between Christ and his church. The bond which God himself has tied, is not to be lightly untied. Let those who are for divorcing their wives for every offence, consider what would become of them, if God should deal with them in like manner. See Isa. 50. 1; Jer. 3. 1.

It was an advantage to the disciples that they had opportunities of personal converse with Christ, not only about gospel mysteries, but about moral duties, for their further satisfaction. Wisdom and grace, holiness and love, reigning in the heart, will make those commands easy, which, to the carnal mind, may be as a heavy yoke.

6. From the beginning of the world.

12. For a woman to divorce her husband was contrary to law; it had recently been introduced by Salome, the sister of Herod the great.

§ 104. Ver. 13-16. *Christ's love to little children*

A kind and tender disposition notices little children, and this was remarkable in our Lord Jesus; which is an encouragement, not only to children to apply to Christ, when very young, but to grown people, who are conscious of weakness and manifold infirmities, being helpless and useless, like little children. Here we have little children brought to Christ. Their parents or nurses brought them, that he should touch them, in token of his commanding and conferring a blessing on them. It does not appear that they needed bodily cures, nor were they capable of being taught; but it seems those who had the care of them believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good; therefore they bring them to him, knowing that he could reach their hearts.

Observe the discouragement the disciples gave to the bringing children to Christ; They rebuked those who brought them; as if they had been sure that they knew their Master's mind in this matter, whereas he had lately cautioned them not to despise the little ones—the youngest or the weakest believer.

See the encouragement Christ gave to it. Christ is very angry with his own disciples, if they discountenance any in coming to him themselves, or in bringing their children to him. He ordered that they should be brought to him, and nothing said or done to hinder them; Suffer



little children to come to me. They should be directed to the Saviour as soon as they are capable of understanding his words. He came to set up the kingdom of God among men, and took this occasion to declare that kingdom admitted little children to be the subjects of it.

Also we must receive the kingdom of God as little children; we must stand affected to Christ and his grace, as little children to their parents, nurses, and teachers. Little children are not versed in fiction and deceit, and are strangers to artful disguises; they are yielding and flexible, not wilful and obstinate; do not trust to their own understanding, but rely on the instructions of their parents, and others of superior understanding. Their anger does not last long; they do not lay up injuries in high resentment, entertaining deep and rooted malice. So Christians, in malice are children, 1 Cor. 14. 20. Here is therefore a fit and lively emblem of the followers of the Lamb.—(31.)

Let us particularly attend to our Lord's declaration; none, even of the most distinguished learning or abilities, can be a true subject of grace here, or of the kingdom of glory hereafter, who does not stoop to receive the instructions and blessings of that kingdom in a humble teachable spirit. Thus it is that not many wise and learned of this world become followers of Christ, any more than the rich and noble.

Christ received the children, and outdid the desires of these parents; they begged he would touch them, but he did more. Now the scripture was fulfilled, Isa. 40. 11: He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. If we, in a right manner, bring our children to Christ, he will take them up, not only in the arms of his power and providence, but in the arms of his pity and grace. He put his hands upon them, denoting the bestowing of his Spirit upon them, for that is the hand of the Lord, and his setting them apart for himself. He blessed them with the spiritual blessings he came to give. Our children are happy, if they have but the Mediator's blessing for their portion.

§ 165. Ver. 17-22. *Christ's discourse with the rich young man.*

This young ruler came running to Christ, which indicated his humility; thus also he manifested his earnestness and importunity. He had now an opportunity

of consulting this great Prophet in the things that belonged to his peace. He came to him when he was in the way; he did not insist upon a private conference with him, but when he had found him he would embrace that opportunity of advising with him, and was not ashamed. He kneeled to Jesus, in token of great value and veneration for him as a Teacher come from God, and his earnest desire to be taught by him. His address was serious and weighty. He asked what he shall do now that he may be happy for ever. Most inquire for good to be *had* in this world, Ps. 4. 6, any good; he asks for good to be *done* in this world, in order to enjoy the greatest good in the other world.

Christ encouraged this address, 1. By assisting his faith. The young man called him, Good Master. Christ would have him mean thereby that he looked upon him to be God, since there is none good but one, that is God. 2. By directing his practice. He mentions the six commandments of the second table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbour. The ruler thought himself able to say in some measure, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Ignorance of the extent and spiritual nature of the Divine law, makes people think themselves better than really they are. Paul was alive without the law. But when he saw that to be spiritual, he saw himself to be carnal, Rom. 7. 9, 14.

Jesus, beholding him, loved him. He was pleased to find that he had lived inoffensively, and pleased to see that he was inquisitive how to live better. Christ particularly loves to see young people and rich people asking the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward.

But here is a sorrowful parting between Christ and this young man. Christ gave him a command of trial, by which it would appear whether he in sincerity aimed at eternal life, and pressed towards it. Can he find in his heart to part with his riches for the service of Christ? After a while, tribulation and persecution will arise, because of the word; and he must be forced to sell his estate, or have it taken from him, and how will he like that? Can he find in his heart to go through the hardest, costliest services he may be called to, as a disciple of Christ, and depend upon him for a recompense in heaven? He asks Christ what he shall do, more than he has done, to obtain eternal life; and

Christ puts it to him, whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for eternal life which he seems to have. Does he really believe there is treasure in heaven sufficient to make up for all he can leave, or lose, or lay out for Christ? Is he willing to bear a present cross, in expectation of a future crown?

He was sorry he could not be a follower of Christ, upon easier terms than leaving all to follow him; that he could not lay hold on eternal life, and keep hold of his temporal possessions too. He went away grieved. Here appeared the truth of that, Matt. 6. 24, Ye cannot serve God and mammon. While he held to mammon he did in effect despise Christ, as all those do who prefer the world before him. A sharp trial will often prove moral goodness to be defective, and to be only carnal selfishness in a more decent garb, so that self-denying duties no more suit the love of the present world, than the doctrines of grace suit self-admiration.

§ 105. Ver. 22-31. *The hindrance of riches.*

Christ will keep no man against his will; we do not find that Christ called back the young ruler, but he took this occasion to instruct his disciples.

1. The difficulty of the salvation of those who have an abundance of this world; because there are few who have much to leave, that can be persuaded to leave it for Christ, or to lay it out in doing good. He tells them, that the danger arose from their placing confidence in riches, expecting protection, provision, and a portion from them. Those who have such value for the wealth of the world, will never be brought rightly to value Christ and his grace. Those who have ever so much riches, but see their vanity and their utter insufficiency to make a soul happy, have got over the difficulty, and can easily part with them for Christ: while others who have ever so little, if they set their hearts upon that little, and place their happiness therein, it will keep them from Christ. He enforces this assertion with, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, that trusts in riches, or inclines to do so, to enter into the kingdom of God. Some suggest that the word we translate a camel, signifies a cable-ropes. A rich man, compared with the poor, is as a cable to a single thread, stronger, but not so pliable, and it will not go through the

needle's eye, unless it be untwisted. So the rich man must be loosed and disentangled from his riches, and then there is some hope of him, that thread by thread he may be got through the eye of the needle, otherwise all he can do is to cast anchor in the earth. Few can possess riches without loving and trusting in them, and it is very hard to break the strong bands which hold a carnal mind to large possessions.

The disciples knew what were generally the sentiments of the Jewish teachers—that the Spirit of God chooses to reside upon rich men; they knew that all either are rich, or fain would be so; and were amazed to hear that it should be so hard for rich people to go to heaven.

2. The greatness of the salvation of those who have but a little of this world, and leave it for Christ. Peter mentioned what he and the rest of the disciples had left to follow him. You have done well, saith Christ, and it will prove in the end that you have done well for yourselves. You shall be abundantly recompensed, and not only you shall be reimbursed, who have left only a little; but those that have much, though it were as much as this young man had, yet they shall have much more than an equivalent. And this has been the choice of suffering saints; farewell houses and lands, though ever so convenient and desirable, though the inheritance of fathers, for the house which is from heaven, and the inheritance of the saints in light. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy is, when his love to Christ comes in competition with love that is his duty. The advantage of obedience will be great. God's providence gave Job double what he had lost, but suffering christians shall have a hundred-fold, in the comforts of the Spirit sweetening their creature-comforts.

It is added here, With persecutions. Even when gainers by Christ, let them still expect to suffer for him, till they come to heaven. Nay, persecutions seem among receivings in this present time; for unto you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his name; yet this is not all, they shall have eternal life in the world to come, which is more than ten thousand fold, ten thousand times told, for all their losses. But because they talked so much, and really more than became them, of leaving all for Christ, he tells them, that though they were first

called, there should be disciples called after them; that should be preferred before them; as St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than the rest of the apostles, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Let us learn contentment in a low estate, and to watch against the love of riches in a high one. Let us pray to be enabled to part with all, if required, in Christ's service; or to use all we are allowed to keep in his service.

18. *Shelton* considers there is no doubt this inquiry of our Lord was made to try whether the man who called him good, would confess him to be the Messiah, according to the prophecies.

§ 106, 107. Ver. 33-45. *Christ foretells his sufferings.*

When the disciples were going up to Jerusalem, Jesus went before them. Thus he showed himself forward to go on with his undertaking, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Christ's constancy in going on with his undertaking for our salvation, was, is, and will be the wonder of all his disciples.

He did not feed them with hopes that he might escape, but told them again the things that should happen to him. The method and particulars of Christ's sufferings are more largely foretold here than in any other of the predictions.

He gave a check to two of his disciples for their ambitious request. Their nother presented their petition, they seconded it. As there are some that do not use, so there are some that abuse the great encouragements Christ has given us in prayer. It is commendable faith to ask for the great things he has promised; but culpable presumption to make such a demand. We had better leave it to him to do for us what he sees fit, and he will do more than we can desire, Eph. 3. 20.

Christ would not engage to do for them whatever they desired, but would have them go on with their suit, that they might be made ashamed of it. Many have been led into a snare by false notions of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world, and like the kingdoms of the potentates of this world. James and John conclude, if Christ rise again, he must be a king, and if he be a king, his apostles must be peers, and one of these would be the first peer of the realm, and the other next him. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many a time been dazzled. Whereas to be good should be more our care than to look great, or to have the preeminence. Our weakness appears as much in our prayers

as in any thing. We cannot order our speech, when we speak to God, by reason of darkness, both concerning him, and concerning ourselves. It is the will of Christ that we should prepare for sufferings, and leave it to him to recompense us for them. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him; we may trust him to provide what the degrees of our glory shall be.

The other disciples discovered their own ambition, in displeasure at the ambition of James and John; Christ took occasion to warn them against it, and all their successors in the ministry of the gospel. He shows them that dominion was generally abused in the world. The care is, what rulers shall get by their subjects to support their own pomp and grandeur, not what they shall do for them. Therefore it ought not to be admitted into the church; those that shall be put under their charge, must be as sheep under the charge of the shepherd, who is to tend and feed them. He that would be truly great, must earnestly seek to do good to all, must labour in the hardest services. To convince them of this, he sets before them his own example. He takes upon him the form of a servant, comes to minister. He becomes obedient to death, and to its dominion, for he gives his life a ransom for many. Did He die for the benefit of his people, and shall not we study to live for their benefit? If Jesus would gratify all our desires, it would soon appear that we were aspiring to reputation or authority, and were unwilling to taste of his cup, or to have any measure of his baptism; we should often ask for we know not what, and be ruined by having our prayers answered. But he loves us more wisely than we love ourselves, and will only give his people what is good for them.

§ 108. Ver. 46-52. *Bartimeus healed.*

Matthew mentions two blind men who received sight on this occasion; probably the other was excited to apply by the example of Bartimeus, and was not so remarkable a person. Bartimeus, it seems, was well known in those parts, and sat by the way-side begging. He had heard of Jesus and his miracles, and was enabled to believe that he was the promised Messiah. Learning that he was passing by, he hoped to recover his eye-sight.

He cried, Have mercy on me, O Lord,

thou Son of David. - In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should look to him as the promised Messiah. Christ encouraged him to hope that he should find mercy; for he stood still, and commanded him to be called. We must never reckon it a hinderance to us in our way to stand still, when it is to do a good work. Those near Bartimeus, who discouraged him at first, perhaps now signified to him the gracious call of Christ; Be of good comfort, rise, he calls thee; and if he call thee, he will cure thee. The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that if we come to him we shall have what we come for.

The poor man hereupon cast away his loose upper garment, and came to Jesus; he cast away every thing that might any way hinder him in coming to Christ. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must strip themselves of all conceit, must free themselves from every weight, and the sin that, like long garments, most easily besets them, Heb. 12.1.

The particular favour he begged was that his eyes might be opened. It is very desirable to be in a capacity of earning our bread; and where God has given men limbs and senses, it is a shame by foolishness and slothfulness to make themselves, in effect, blind and lame.

His eyes were opened. Mark here adds, Thy faith has made thee whole; faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; not thy importunity, but thy faith, Christ setting thy faith on work. Those supplies are most comfortable, that are fetched in by our faith. When he had received his sight, he followed Jesus in the way. By this he made it appear that he was thoroughly cured, and by this he evidenced the grateful sense he had of Christ's kindness.

Let sinners be exhorted to imitate blind Bartimeus. If they have not had their eyes opened to behold the excellency of Christ, and the beauty of holiness, they are in more dreadful darkness in respect to the spiritual world, than any blind man as to the natural. Where the gospel is preached, or the written word circulated, Jesus is passing by, and this is the sinner's opportunity. Though he cannot as yet understand his doctrine, or see his glory, let him, as a perishing sinner, cry after him for mercy. If any

deride, threaten, or would silence him, let him cry the more earnestly for salvation; the Saviour will notice him. Christ's invitations and promises bid him be called. Let us also delight to encourage inquiring souls, bidding them be of good comfort, and to rise and go to Jesus. All delay must be avoided; every hinderance must be laid aside. He inquires what we would have. Let us then learn our own wants, and his promises, that our answer may be ready. Thus faith brings salvation from Christ into men's souls; and they join the company of his disciples, showing forth his praises, and walking in his ways. It is not enough to come to Christ for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may honour him, and receive instruction from him. Those who have spiritual eyesight, see that beauty in Christ which will effectually draw them to run after him.

## CHAPTER XI.

V. 1—11. M. 21.1—11. L. 19.29—38. J. 12.12—18.

V. 12—14. M. 21.18,19.

V. 15—19. M. 21.12,13. L. 19.45—48.

V. 20—24. M. 21.20—22.

V. 27—33. M. 21.23—27. L. 20.1—8.

§ 111. Ver. 1—11. *Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.*

Christ came into Jerusalem thus remarkably, to show that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies. This would encourage his disciples who were timorous. Also to show that he was not disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings.

He rode upon an ass's colt. He had no rich trappings; they threw their clothes upon the colt, and so he sat upon him. The persons that attended were mean people; and all the show they could make was by spreading their garments in the way, and strewing branches of trees in the way, as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation; and they are instructions to us not to mind high things; but to condescend to them of low estate. How ill it becomes christians to take state, when Christ was so far from affecting it!

The undeniable proofs which he gave while on earth, of his knowledge of all events, and power over all hearts, should inspire us with implicit confidence in him, and excite to unreserved obedience to him. For we shall find all his words

true and faithful, and he will carry us through all difficulties we meet with in his service. He received the joyful hosannas of the people; both the welcome they gave him, and their good wishes to the prosperity of his kingdom. It was God that put it into the hearts of these people to cry Hosanna, who were not by management brought to it, as those were who afterwards cried, Crucify! Crucify! Christ reckons himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour beyond their intentions. They welcomed his person; Blessed is he that cometh, the "He that should come," so often promised, so long expected; he comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed be he; let him have our applauses, and best affections; he is a blessed Saviour, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be He that sent him. Let him be blessed in the name of the Lord; let all nations and ages call him blessed, and think and speak highly and honourably of him. Hosanna in the highest. Praises be to our God, who is in the highest heavens over all, God blessed for ever; or, Let Him be praised by his angels in the highest heavens, let our hosannas echo theirs.

Christ, thus attended, thus applauded, came into the city, and went directly to the temple. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, Mal. 3. 1, The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; without sending any immediate notice before him, he shall surprise you with a day of visitation. He came to the temple, and took a view of its present state. We may be confident that God sees all the wickedness in the world, though he does not at present reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ retired in the evening to Bethany, there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected as designing to head a faction.

3. Or, "And will speedily send him back hither." *A. Clarke.*

10. Hosanna signifies, "Save, I beseech thee." It was a form of acclamation used by the Jews at the feast of tabernacles, or on any occasion of rejoicing.

§ 112 Ver. 12-18. *The barren fig-tree cursed — The temple cleansed.*

Christ had a resting-place at Bethany, but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither he returned in the morning. Before he was gone far he was hungry, for he was subject to all the sinless infirmities of our

nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a fig-tree, but he found nothing but leaves; he looked to find some fruit, for the time of gathering in figs, though it was near, was not yet come: he found none. Christ was willing to make it an example, not to the trees, but to the men of that generation, and therefore cursed it. This was intended to be a type and figure of the doom upon the Jewish church, to which he came, seeking fruit but found none, Luke 13. 6, 7; and though it was not, according to the doom in the parable, immediately cut down, yet blindness and hardness befell them, Rom. 11. 8, 25, so that they were from thenceforth good for nothing. The disciples heard what sentence Christ passed on this tree.

Christ went to the temple, and began to reform the abuses that prevailed in its courts, to show that when the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, Rom. 11. 26, and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, to destroy the temple, but to purify and refine it. This he did as one having authority, as a Son in his own house.

He would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, through any of the courts of the temple. He gave a good reason for this; It shall be the house of prayer to all nations: it was so in the first institution, when Solomon dedicated it. And it was prophesied that it should be yet more so. Christ will have the temple as a type of the gospel church, to be a house of prayer. When all sacrifices should be abolished, the spiritual offerings of prayer and praise should continue for ever. It should be so to all nations, not to the people of the Jews only; for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. It was therefore insufferable for them to make it a den of thieves, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have invited to it.

The scribes and the chief priests found that Christ had a great interest; that all the people were astonished at his doctrine, and that every thing he said was an oracle and a law to them; and what could he not effect, being thus supported? They therefore sought, not how they might make their peace with him, but how they might destroy him. A desperate attempt, which they themselves could not but fear was fighting against God.

But they care not what they do to support their own power and grandeur.

§ 113. Ver. 19—26. *Prayer in faith.*

At even, as usual, Jesus went out of the city, to Bethany. The next morning as they passed by, they observed the fig-tree dried up from the roots. Often more is included in Christ's curses than is expressed, as appears by their effects. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to deceive people. This represented the character and state of the Jewish church; which, from thenceforward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but only to be burned. The establishment of the levitical priesthood was confirmed by the miracle of a dry rod, which in one night budded and blossomed, and brought forth almonds, Numb. 17. 8; a happy omen of the fruitfulness and flourishing of that priesthood. And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests who had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, that the Jews, who had been so long God's only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how that fig-tree should so soon wither away; but it came of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him. We should fear this sentence worse than death, and should rest in no religion that does not render us fruitful in good works. This will be the effect of faith in God, in proportion as it is strong and lively.

Christ taught them from hence to pray in faith. Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulties shall be got over. Apply this to that faith of miracles, which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel were endowed with, which did wonders in natural things, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; these were, in effect, the removing of mountains. The apostle speaks of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, 1 Cor. 13. 2. It may be applied to that miracle of faith, which all true christians are endowed with, which does wonders in spiritual things. It justifies us, Rom. 5. 1, and so removes mountains of guilt, and casts them into the depths of the sea, never to rise up in judgment against us, Mic. 7. 19. It purifies the heart Acts 15. 9, and so removes mountains of corruption, and makes them plain

before the grace of God, Zech. 4. 7. It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet lives. By faith we set the Lord always before us, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds; and this is effectual to remove mountains.

To this is here added the necessary qualification of prevailing prayer, that we forgive all those who have been any way injurious to us. Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; they called their prayer their standings. But the primitive christians generally used the more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling. If we have injured others, before we pray, we must go and be reconciled to them, Matt. 5. 23, 24. But if they have injured us, we can go a nearer way to work, and forgive them immediately from our hearts. This is a good step towards obtaining the pardon of our own sins. The want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining the pardon of our sins. This ought to be remembered in prayer; one great errand we have to the throne of grace is to pray for pardon of our sins: care about it ought to be our daily care. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design to engage his disciples to love one another.

20. It appears from Matt. 21. 19, that the fig-tree began to wither away immediately on the sentence being pronounced, and on the following morning the disciples saw it dried up from the roots. There is a sort of fig-tree in the east, called the sycamore fig, which bears fruit several times in the year, and some commentators suppose that is here meant. See *Calmé*. Others remark, that the fig-tree always puts forth the fruit before its leaves, and as it was not yet the season for gathering figs, some might be expected to be found upon the tree, and, though unripe, might be eaten for allaying hunger. They consider there is an inversion of a part of the sentence, not unfrequent in the unpolished style of this evangelist, and read it, "He came if haply he might find any fruit thereon, for fig time was not yet come; but when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves." See *Campbell* and *Bloomfield*. Matthew speaks of this fig-tree as growing by the way-side, so that it was not the private property of any one.

23. The Jews used this expression as a proverb, signifying the removing or overcoming great difficulties. A rooter up of mountains was an epithet commonly applied to an eminent or learned rabbi.

§ 114 Ver. 27—33. *The pharisees questioned concerning John the baptist.*

The members of the great sanhedrim claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to Christ when he was walking in

the temple, teaching the people. The cloisters, or piazzas, in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose. The great men were vexed to see him followed, and therefore came to him with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him with this question. By what authority doest thou these things? They designed thereby to embarrass him. This they made the last refuge of an obstinate unbelief; because they were resolved not to receive his doctrine, they were resolved to find it invalid.

Christ effectually embarrassed them with the question, By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? By this, our Saviour intimates how near akin his doctrine and baptism were to those of John; they had the same origin, the same design and tendency—to introduce the gospel-kingdom. They could not but think that John Baptist was a man sent of God. But the difficulty was, what they should say to it now. Men who do not oblige themselves to speak as they think, which is a certain rule, cannot avoid perplexing themselves.

If they own the baptism of John to be from heaven, as really it was, they shame themselves. Why did ye not then believe him? They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so. If they say, his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own, they expose themselves; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed, and therefore the people would not bear that he should be reflected on. There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects, but wicked rulers likewise, are liable to, of which God makes use as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress violence. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well-doing—put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. 2. 15. They did not deserve to be instructed; for it was plain that they contended not for truth, but victory; nor did he need to tell them; the works which he did, told them plainly that he had authority from God; since no man could do the miracles which he did, unless God were with him.

It was well that they considered what might be said against them, which most christians do not, in their disputes. But those who deny necessary premises are not to be disputed with.—(3.)

29. It was usual among the Jews to answer one question by proposing another, so that this was no attempt to evade the inquiry of the chief priests. The latter had authority, by virtue of their office, to inquire into the pretensions of a prophet. They doubtless expected that Jesus would have declared himself to be the Messiah, and then they would have charged him with blasphemy.

## CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1-12.	M. 21. 33-45.	L. 20. 9-19.
Ver. 13-27.	M. 22. 15-32.	L. 20. 20-38.
Ver. 28-31.	M. 22. 33-40.	
Ver. 32.		L. 20. 39.
Ver. 35-37.	M. 22. 41-45.	L. 20. 41-44.
Ver. 38-40.	M. 23. 1, 6, 7, 14.	L. 20. 45-47.
Ver. 41-44.		L. 21. 1-4.

§ 114. Ver. 1-19. *The parable of the vineyard and husbandmen.*

Christ now begins in parables to show that he would lay aside the Jewish church. When God showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel, Psa. 147. 19, when he set up his temple among them, his priesthood, and his other ordinances, then he let out to them the vineyard he had planted, which he had hedged, and in which he built a tower. Those to whom God lets out his vineyard, he sends his servants to, reminding them of his just expectations from them.

It is sad to think what base usage God's faithful ministers have met with in all ages, from those who have enjoyed the privileges of the church, but have not brought forth fruit answerable. God at length sent them his Son, his well-beloved; and it might be expected that he whom their Master loved, they also should respect and love; but instead of reverencing him because he was the son and heir, they therefore hated him. Because Christ, in calling to repentance and reformation, made his demands with more authority than the prophets had done, they determined to put him to death, that all the respect and obedience of the people might be paid to them only. There is an inheritance, which, if they had duly revered the Son, might have been theirs, a heavenly inheritance; but they slighted that, and would have their inheritance in the wealth, pomp, and powers of this world. So they took him, and killed him; they had not done it yet, but they would do it in a little time; they cast him out of the vineyard, they refused to admit his gospel when he was gone.

For such sinful shameful doings nothing can be expected but a fearful doom. When they killed his servants, and his

Son, He determined to destroy them; and this was fulfilled when Jerusalem was laid waste, and the Jewish nation made a desolation. He will give the vineyard to others. This was fulfilled by the taking in of the Gentiles, and the abundance of fruit which the gospel brought forth in all the world, Col. 1. 6. Their opposition to Christ's exaltation shall be no obstruction to it, ver. 10, 11. The Stone which the builders rejected, notwithstanding that, is become the Head of the corner. And all the world shall see and own this to be the Lord's doing, in justice to the Jews, and in compassion to the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ was the Lord's doing, and it is his doing to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there; and if it be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes.

The chief priests and scribes knew he spake this parable against them. They sought to lay hold on him, and make him their prisoner immediately, and so to fulfil what he had just now said they would do to him! Nothing restrained them from it but their awe of the people. They did not reverence Christ, nor fear God, but were afraid, that if they should publicly lay hold on Christ, the people would rise and rescue him. They left him, and went their way. If they could not do hurt to him, they resolved he should not do good to them. If men's prejudices are not conquered by the evidence of truth, they are but confirmed; and if the corruptions of the heart are not subdued by faithful reproofs, they are but enraged and exasperated. If the gospel is not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death.

We are all answerable for the advantages afforded us, to become fruitful in good works. The scriptures, and faithful preachers, and the coming of Christ in the flesh, call on us to render due praise to God in our lives. Let sinners beware of a proud carnal spirit; if they revile or despise the preachers of Christ, they would have done so to their Master, had they lived when he was upon earth. Let us then seek grace from the Son of God to render us fruitful in the works of righteousness, to the glory of his name, that our privileges may be continued and our souls perfected.

§ 115. Ver. 13-17. *Question respecting tribute.*

The enemies of Christ tried to insnare him by putting questions to him. The pre-

tence they made was, that they desired him to resolve them a case of conscience. They called him Master, owned him for a Teacher of the way of God, a Teacher in truth, one who taught what was good, and upon principles of truth, who would not be brought by smiles or frowns to depart from the rules of equity and goodness. If they spake as they thought concerning Christ, when they said, We know that thou art right, their persecuting him, and putting him to death, as a deceiver, was a sin against knowledge. The professions and pretences of hypocrites will be produced against them, and they will be self-condemned. But if they did not know or believe it, they lied unto God with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue.

They would be thought desirous to know their duty, when really they desired only to know what Jesus would say, in hope that which side soever he took of the question, they might take occasion from it to accuse him. Nothing is more likely to ensnare ministers, than bringing them to meddle with controversies about civil rights, and to settle between the prince and the subject, which is fit should be done, while it is not at all fit that they should have the doing of it. Christ was fit to determine it, for by him kings reign, and princes decree justice.

Christ determined the question, and evaded the snare, by referring them to the national concessions they had already made, by which they were precluded from disputing this matter. He made them acknowledge that the current money of their nation was Roman money, and if so, Cesar might command their money for the public benefit, because he has the custody and conduct of the state. Cesar might not command their consciences, nor did he pretend to it; he offered not to make any alteration in their religion. Pay your tribute, therefore, without murmuring or disputing, but be sure to render to God the things that are God's. Perhaps he referred to the parable he had just put forth, in which he had condemned them for not rendering the fruits to the Lord of the vineyard. Many who seem careful to give to men their due, are in no care to give to God the glory due unto his name.

All that heard Christ, marvelled at the great wisdom of his answer. Many will commend the words of a sermon, who will not be commanded by the doctrines of it.



Let God's ministers and people seek to copy the firmness, meekness, and prudence of the Lord Jesus, and endeavour to graft important instruction on insidious questions and frivolous objections. If professors of the gospel conscientiously rendered to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's, and if all teachers taught the way of God in truth, without being respecters of persons, they would soon put their adversaries to shame and silence.

§ 115. Ver. 18-27. *Concerning the resurrection.*

The sadducees, who were the deists of that age, attacked the Lord Jesus. Their design was upon his doctrine, to hinder the spreading of truth. They denied that there was any resurrection, any world of spirits, any state of rewards and punishments after death. Now those great and fundamental truths which they denied, Christ had made it his business clearly to establish and prove.

See here the method Christ takes to clear and establish this truth. He does not pass it over lightly, but enlarges upon it, that if they should not be reclaimed, yet others might be confirmed.

He charges the sadducees with error, and charges that upon their ignorance. Not but that the sadducees had read the scriptures, and perhaps were ready in them; yet they might truly be said not to know the scriptures, because they did not know the sense and meaning of them, but put false constructions upon them. A right knowledge of the scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preservative against error. They could not but know that God is almighty, but they would not apply that doctrine to this matter; they gave up the truth to objections, all which would have been answered, if they had but remembered that with God nothing is impossible.

Christ puts aside their objection, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light. The relation between husband and wife, though instituted in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, (1 Cor. 15. 50.) It is no wonder if we confound ourselves with endless absurdities, when we measure our ideas of the world of spirits by the affairs of this world of sense.

He builds the doctrine of the future state, and of the blessedness of the righteous in that state, upon the covenant of God with Abraham. We have advantage in dealing with those who have read the scriptures, though many that have read them, wrest them, as these sadducees did, to their own destruction. He refers them to what God said to Moses at the bush, I am the God of Abraham; not only, I was so, but I am so; I am the portion and happiness of Abraham, a God all-sufficient to him. It is absurd to think that God's relation to Abraham should be continued if Abraham was annihilated, or that the living God should be the portion and happiness of a man that must be for ever dead; and therefore you must conclude that Abraham's soul exists and acts, though now for a time in a state of separation from the body. Upon the whole matter, he concludes, Ye therefore do greatly err. Those that deny the resurrection, greatly err, and ought to be told so. Let us seek to pass through this dying world, with a joyful hope of eternal happiness, and of a glorious resurrection; expecting to be made equal to the angels, while others are content to live and die like the beasts that perish.

28. "In the bush," signifies, in the section of scripture which relates to the burning bush, now Exodus 3.

§ 115. Ver. 28-34. *The great command of the law.*

We have here an account of one of the scribes, who noticed Christ's answer to the sadducees, and owned that he had answered them well. We have his application to Christ for instruction; it became him; not tempting Christ, but desiring to improve his converse with him.

He inquired, which is that command which we ought to have in a special manner respect to, and our obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest?

Christ gave him a direct answer. Those who sincerely desire to be instructed concerning their duty, Christ will guide in judgment, and teach his way. He tells him that the great commandment of all, which indeed includes all, is, that of loving God with all our hearts. Where this is the commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul; the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. Where this

is not; nothing else that is good is done, or done aright, or accepted, or done long. Loving God with all our heart, will engage us to every thing by which he will be pleased. Our Saviour prefixes to this command the great doctrinal truth upon which it is built: Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; if we firmly believe this, it will follow, that we shall love him with all our heart. He is one Lord, therefore he must be loved with our whole heart; he has the sole right to us, therefore ought to have the sole possession of us, and since there is no God besides, no rival must be admitted.

The second great commandment, is, to love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; we must show it by doing as we would be done by. There is no other commandment greater than these. As they are understood, all other parts of scripture become unfolded. The promises of Christ and the gospel are thereby made more plain: the pardoned and justified believer, loving and obeying these great commandments, will attend to every part of his duty to God and man. Did all act accordingly, what happiness would prevail!

Christ's assertions needed not the scribe's attestations; but it shall be brought against those who persecuted Christ, that one of themselves confessed he said the truth, and said it well. He comments upon it. Christ had quoted the great doctrine, That the Lord our God is one Lord; this he not only assented to, but added, There is none other but he; and therefore we must have no other God besides. Christ had laid down that great law, of loving God with all our heart; and this also he explains—that it is loving him with the understanding, as those that know what abundant reason we have to love him. Our rational powers and faculties must all be set on work to lead the affections of our souls toward God. Christ had said, To love God and our neighbour is the greatest commandment of all; Yea, said the scribe, it is better, it is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices, more acceptable to God, and better for ourselves. Some held that the law of sacrifices was the greatest commandment of all! but the scribe readily agreed with our Saviour, that the law of love to God and our neighbour is greater than that of sacrifice, even than that of whole burnt-

offerings, which were intended only for the honour of God. All these were typical atonements for men's transgressions of the moral law; they were of no efficacy, excepting as they expressed repentance and faith in the promised Saviour, and as they led to moral obedience.

Because we have not thus loved God and man, because our character and conduct are the very reverse, therefore we are condemned sinners; we need repentance, and we need mercy; we need Christ and his atoning sacrifice; we cannot be justified through the works of the law, but must be saved by grace, through faith in the Saviour, and through the sanctification of the Spirit to obedience; if really interested in this redemption, we shall daily mourn and be humbled because our obedience is so very defective.

Christ approved what the scribe said, and encouraged him to proceed in his inquiries. He had answered as one that had considered. He stood fair for further advance, for this knowledge of the law leads to conviction of sin, to repentance, to discovery of our need of mercy, and understanding the way of justification by Christ. This should have invited many to consult Jesus; but it had the contrary effect. Every thing he said, was spoken with such authority and majesty, that all stood in awe of him; those that designed to cavil, were afraid to ask.

§ 115, 116. Ver. 35—40. *Christ the Son and yet the Lord of David.*

Christ shows the people how weak and defective the scribes were in their preaching, and how unable to solve difficulties of the Old Testament, which they undertook to expound. They told the people the Messiah was to be the Son of David, yet they could not tell them how, notwithstanding that it was very proper for David, in the spirit of prophecy, to call him his Lord, as he doth, Ps. 110. 1. Those are unworthy to sit in Moses' seat, who, though they are able to preach the truth, are not in some measure able to defend it when they have preached it.

This, no doubt, incensed them more against Christ; but the common people heard him gladly. What he preached, was surprising and affecting; and though it reflected upon the scribes, it was instructive to them. When we attend to what the scriptures declare concerning the person and offices of Christ, we shall be led to confess him as our Lord and

God; to welcome him as the end of the law for righteousness to every believer; to obey him as our exalted Redeemer, and to rejoice that he is seated at the right hand of the Father, to perfect his people's salvation, and to put all enemies under his feet. If the common people hear these things gladly, while the learned and distinguished oppose, we may congratulate the former, and pity the latter.

Christ cautions the people to take heed of the scribes; neither to imbibe their peculiar opinions, nor the opinions of the people concerning them. They affect to appear very great. They affect to appear very good. But therein they aimed to advance themselves: they coveted applause, and they therein aimed to enrich themselves. They made themselves masters of widows' estates by fraud; to screen themselves from the suspicion of dishonesty, they put on the mask of piety. Let not prayers, no, nor long prayers, be thought the worse of, if made in humility and sincerity, for having been by some thus abused. But as iniquity, thus disguised with a show of piety, is double iniquity, so its doom will be doubly heavy.

§ 117. Ver. 41—44. *The poor widow commended.*

Our Lord, when finally about to leave the temple, sat down over against the treasury, into which the people put money for defraying the expenses incurred by the services of the temple. He saw several rich persons giving large sums; at length a poor widow put in two mites, which make a farthing, and he declared that she had cast in more than all the rest. Their larger donations were only a part of their superfluities, and bore no proportion to their abundance; she cast in all her living, having nothing left. All she had to depend upon was what she might earn by her labour, or receive as alms. Doubtless our Lord saw that she did not do this out of singularity, or in expectation of praise or reward, but in dependence on the Divine promises and providence.

Let us not forget that Jesus still observes the treasury. He sees how much, and from what motives, men contribute. He looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men. He approves of liberality in the rich; they should apportion a part of their wealth, more than they generally do, to works of piety and charity, but it should

be done in simplicity. If objects of charity do not present themselves that require so much, they ought to inquire them out, and to devise liberal things. Nor should they be flattered that their gifts will atone for any ungodliness or personal neglect of the cause of Christ. Nor should the poor be discouraged in their humble endeavours to show the sincerity of their love. Many would have been ready to censure this poor widow, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for herself? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the treasury to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any who would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find many who will imitate her; and yet our Saviour commends her, therefore we are sure that she did very well and wisely. If Christ saith, Well done, no matter who saith otherwise. Public charities should be encouraged, they bring upon a nation public blessings; and even though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our quota to them. And the feeble efforts of the poor to honour their Saviour, will be commended in that day, when all the splendid actions of unbelievers will be exposed to deserved contempt.

41. *A. Clarke* observes that the original signifies "brass money," so that the word "much," may only refer to the number of the pieces, and not indicate any considerable value.

42. Two mites (lepton) was the smallest sum allowed to be given to the treasury.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1—37. M. 24 1—51. L. 21. 5—36.

§ 118. Ver. 1—4. *The destruction of the temple foretold*

We may here see how apt many of Christ's disciples are to idolize things that look great, and which have been long esteemed as sacred. They had heard Christ complain of those who had made the temple a den of thieves, yet they count him to be as much pleased as they were, with the stately structure and adorning of it. But how little Christ values external pomp, where there is not real purity! The sumptuousness of the fabric shall be no security to it, nor move any compassion in the Lord Jesus towards it. He looks with pity upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, but we

do not find him look with any pity upon the ruin of a magnificent house. How soon will flourishing cities and stately buildings be desolated and come to nothing through the sin of man! Let us then be reminded how necessary it is for us to have a more permanent mansion in heaven, and to be prepared for it by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, sought in the earnest and persevering use of all the means of grace.

Observe how natural it is to us to desire to know things to come, and the times of them; we are apt to be more inquisitive about that than about our duty. Tell us what shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled.

1. For a description of the temple, see the general notes. The mount of Olives commands a complete view of the temple as well as of the city of Jerusalem.

§ 118. Ver. 5-13. *Christ's prophetic declaration.*

Our Lord Jesus, in reply to the disciples' question, does not so much satisfy their curiosity as direct their consciences. And he gives them the cautions which were needful, with reference to events that should shortly come to pass.

1. They must take heed that they are not deceived by the seducers and impostors that should shortly arise, ver. 5, 6. When many are deceived, we should thereby be awakened to look to ourselves.

2. They must take heed that they are not disturbed at the reports of wars, which they should be alarmed with, ver. 7, 8. Let it be no surprise to you; you are bid to expect it, and such things must needs be, for God has appointed them, in order to the further accomplishment of his purposes. Let it be no terror to you, as if your interest were in danger of being overthrown, or your work obstructed by these wars. Let it not be looked upon as an omen of the approaching period of the world, for the end is not yet, ver. 7. Think not that these wars will bring the world to a period. There are other intermediate counsels to be fulfilled, betwixt that end and the end of all things. The disciples of Christ, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy holy security and serenity of mind when all around is in disorder.

3. They must take heed that they are not drawn away from Christ and their duty to him, by the sufferings they should meet with for Christ's sake. Again, he saith, Take heed to yourselves, ver. 9. Be not secure; the parties that contend with one another, will unite against you.

Take heed, therefore, lest you deceive yourselves with the hopes of outward prosperity, and a temporal kingdom, when it is through many tribulations that you must enter into the kingdom of God. Take heed lest you needlessly expose yourselves to trouble. Observe,

First. What the trouble is which they must expect. They shall be hated of all men: trouble enough! It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were hated, but for Christ's name's sake; because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them because he loved them. Their own relations shall betray them. Their church-rulers shall inflict censures upon them. Governors and kings shall use power against them, and shall cause them to be put to death, as enemies to the empire.

Second. What they shall have to comfort themselves with, in the midst of these great and sore troubles. The work they were called to should be carried on and prosper, notwithstanding all opposition, ver. 10. Though they may be crushed and borne down, the gospel cannot. Their sufferings, instead of obstructing their work, should forward it. The gospel is a testimony to us concerning Christ and heaven. If we receive it, it will be a testimony for us, it will justify and save us; if not, it will be a testimony against us in the great day. When brought before kings and governors for Christ's sake, they should have special assistance from Heaven, to plead Christ's cause and their own, ver. 11. Those whom Christ calls out to be advocates for him, shall be furnished with full instructions; and when we are engaged in the service of Christ, we may depend upon the aids of the Spirit of Christ. Heaven at last would make amends for all, ver. 13. The salvation promised is more than deliverance from evil, it is everlasting blessedness, which shall be an abundant recompense for all their services and sufferings.

§ 118. Ver. 14-23. *Christ's prophecy.*

The Jews, in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, hastened their own ruin apace. Here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them within less than forty years after this: we had it before, Matt. 24. 15, &c. Observe,

The Roman armies should invest Jerusalem, the holy city. These were the abomination of desolation, which the Jews did abominate, and by which they should be made desolate. They had rejected Christ, and now God brought upon them an abomination that would be their desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, Dan. 9. 27, as that by which this sacrifice and offering should be made to cease. This army stood where it ought not, in and about the holy city, which the heathen ought not to have approached, nor should have been suffered to do, if Jerusalem had not first profaned the crown of her holiness.

It would go very hard at that time with poor mothers and nurses, ver. 17. Such is the vanity of the creature, that the time may often be, when the greatest comforts will prove the greatest burdens. If there is no remedy but that trouble must come, yet we may desire and pray, that, if it be God's will, the circumstances may be a mitigation of the trouble.

Throughout all the country of the Jews there should be such destruction and desolation made, as could not be paralleled in any history, ver. 19. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was very terrible, but this exceeded it. It threatened a universal slaughter of all the Jews; but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy, and he shortened the days; he let fall his controversy before he had made a full end. As a church and nation the ruin was complete, but many particular persons had their lives given them for a prey. It was for the elect's sake that those days were shortened. There was a promise, that a remnant should be saved, Is. 10. 22, and that God, for his servants' sakes, would not destroy all, Is. 65. 8, and these promises must be fulfilled.

Observe the directions given; When you see the country invaded, and the city invested, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains without delay, ver. 14. They must provide for the safety of their souls; seducers will be busy at that time, therefore they must then double their guard. Having received Christ, be not drawn into the snares of any antichrist; for false Christs, and false prophets, shall arise, ver. 22; and they shall show signs and lying wonders. They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect. They shall draw away many who were forward and zealous professors of religion; for

nothing will be effectual to secure men but that foundation of God which stands immovably sure. But take ye heed, ver. 23. An assurance of persevering, and cautions against apostasy, very well consist with each other. The sufficiency of the scripture is a good argument against listening to such as pretend to inspiration. But the more we consider these things, the more we shall see abundant cause to flee without delay for refuge to Christ, from our own sins and those of others, and to renounce every earthly object for the salvation of our souls.

14. The christians fled to Pella, a city among the mountains, in the half tribe of Manasseh, beyond Jordan. See *Eusebius*.

15. The eastern houses had flat roofs, which were places of frequent resort, so that the alarm of an invading army, or intelligence of its movements, would be first reported among the people there assembled; they would also from thence perceive the approach of invaders. See *Is. 22. 1*. From the tops of the houses in the east there commonly are stairs to the street on the outside of the building.

18. Cestius Gallus appeared before Jerusalem, but withdrew his army about the end of October, A. D. 65. The siege of Jerusalem by Titus began in April, A. D. 70; the first attack was on April 23. The wall of circumvallation was built June 2, 3, 4; the temple burned August 5; and the upper city taken September 2.

22. There were many false prophets and false Christs, from the time of our Lord's crucifixion to the destruction of the city, as we learn from Josephus, and even afterwards. The last and most mischievous called himself Barchochab, or son of the star, in allusion to Balaam's prophecy. His rebellion was suppressed by Adrian, with great slaughter, and occasioned the final expulsion of the Jews from Judea, A. D. 135.

§ 118. Ver. 24-27. *Christ's prophetic declarations.*

The disciples, in their question, had confounded the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. This mistake Christ rectifies, and shows that the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be after that tribulation. Here he foretells the final dissolution of the present frame and fabric of the world. Also the visible appearance of the Lord Jesus, ver. 26. Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds. The gathering together of all the elect to him, ver. 27. A faithful Israelite shall be carried safely, though it were from the utmost border of the land of bondage to the utmost border of the land of promise. When Jerusalem shall be reduced to ashes, then shall the Son of man send his ministers of several nations from the four corners of heaven, so that God shall not want a church, though the ancient Jewish church be cast off.—(45.)

§ 118. Ver. 28-37. *Watchfulness enforced.*

We have here the application of this prophetic sermon.

1. As to the destruction of Jerusalem, expect it to come very shortly. When second causes begin to work, ye expect their effects in their proper order and time. So when ye see these things come to pass, when ye see the Jewish nation embroiled in wars, distracted by false Christs and prophets, and drawing upon themselves the displeasure of the Romans, especially when they are persecuting you for your Master's sake, and thereby standing to what they did when they put him to death, and so filling up the measure of their iniquity, then say that their ruin is nigh, even at the door, and provide for yourselves accordingly. Heaven and earth shall pass away at the end of time; but my words shall not pass away, ver. 31; not one of these predictions shall fail of a punctual accomplishment.

2. As to the end of the world, do not inquire when it will come, for of that day and that hour knoweth no man. At present, men and angels are kept ignorant concerning the precise time, that they both may attend to their proper services in the present day. It follows, Neither the Son; but is there any thing which the Son is ignorant of? It is certain, says Tillotson, that Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of any thing; but the Divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour communicated itself to his human soul according to the Divine pleasure, so that his human nature sometimes might not know some things. Therefore Christ is said to grow in wisdom, Luke 2. 52, which he could not be said to do, if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things, by virtue of its union with the Divinity.

3. As to both, your duty is to watch and pray. The time is kept a secret, that you may be engaged to stand always upon your guard, ver. 33. This Christ illustrates, in the close, by a parable, which teaches that our Master is going away, and has left us something in trust, in charge, of which we must give account, ver. 34. Our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. All are appointed to work, and some are authorized to rule. We ought to be always upon our watch,

in expectation of his return, ver. 35-37. Our Lord will come as the Master of the house, to take account of his servants, of their work, and of the improvement they have made. We know not when he will come; and he has very wisely kept us at uncertainty, that we might be always ready. This is applicable to his coming to us in particular, at our death, as well as to the general judgment. Our present life is a night, a dark night, compared with the other life. We know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age; but, as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and therefore, as soon as we are capable of expecting any thing, we must expect death. Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, he do not find us sleeping, secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming, ready to say, He will not come, and unready to meet him. His coming will indeed be coming suddenly; it will be a great surprise and terror to those who are careless and asleep, it will come upon them as a thief in the night. It is therefore the indispensable duty of Christ's disciples, to watch, to be awake, and keep awake. What I say unto you, I say unto all my disciples and followers; what I say to you of this generation, I say to all that shall believe in me, in every age, Watch, watch, expect my second coming, prepare for it, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.

32. The union of the Divine nature and the human, in the person of the Messiah, does not involve the communication of omniscience to Christ's human mind, any more than omnipresence to his human body. It seems a reasonable opinion, that the communication of supernatural knowledge to the human mind of Jesus Christ was made, as occasions were seen by Divine wisdom to require. In various passages we find things affirmed of the Messiah under the title of the Son of man, which can belong only to his superior nature: it cannot then be extraordinary if we find that asserted of him here as the Son, whether we understand it to be Son of man or Son of God, which can attach only to his dependent and limited capacity.—*J. P. Smith.* Each nature preserves its own natural, essential properties, without such a real communication of the one unto the other, as that the one should become the subject of the properties of the other.—*Queen. Hammond* observes: "To prohibit the curiosity of men, and to engage their vigilance, Christ is pleased to tell them, that no dispensation of God, either of man, as by Daniel, or by angels, or which is the highest, by the Son of man, hath

ordered us to know the seasons; this being no part of the prophetic office, nor within the commission of Christ himself.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1-72. M. 96. L. 92. { J. 12. 1-8.  
J. 13. 21-29.  
J. 18. 2-37.

§ 110. Ver. 1-11. *Christ anointed at Bethany.*

While numbers join with enmity against Christ, there are some, generally in inferior stations, though here is an exception, who spare no pains or expense to show their love to him, and promote his glory.

We have here instances of the kindness of Christ's friends, and the provision made from respect and honour for him. Extraordinary respect was paid him by a woman who thought nothing too good to bestow upon Christ, and to do him honour. Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him? Do we give him the precious ointment of our best affections? Let him have them all; let us love him with all the heart.

It is common for fervent expressions of zeal and affection to be misunderstood and censured. We should not therefore be discouraged, if those whom we love deem our labour wasted, when we are sincerely desirous of honouring Christ, and of promoting his gospel. We should also fear molesting those who express their love in a different manner from ourselves. Common charity to the poor, will not excuse any from particular acts of piety to the Lord Jesus.

Christ makes the anointing to be an act of great faith, as well as of much love. This funeral rite was a prelude to his death approaching. Christ's death and burial were the lowest steps of his humiliation, and therefore, though he cheerfully submitted to them, yet he would have some marks of honour to attend them. He never rode in triumph into Jerusalem, but when he came thither to suffer; nor ever had his head anointed, but for his burial.

He recommended this woman's pious attention to the notice of the church in all ages. She got by it that good name which is better than precious ointment. Those who honour Christ he will honour.

The chief priests, his open enemies, consulted how they might put him to death. The feast of the passover was now at hand, and at that feast he must be crucified, that his death and sufferings might be the more public, and that all

Israel, even those of the dispersion, who came from all parts to the feast, might be witnesses of it, and of the wonders that attended it; and that the Anti-type might answer to the type.

Judas bargained with them for betraying Christ. Did they know that he had a mind to serve them? No, they could not imagine that any of his intimates should be so base; but the spirit that works in the children of disobedience knows how to bring them to assist each other in wicked projects, and then to harden them.

They promised to give him money. Covetousness was Judas' master lust, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to that, and so conquered him. Where the principle of men's profession of religion is carnal and worldly, and the serving of a secular interest, the very same principle, whenever the occasion turns, will be the bitter root of a vile and scandalous apostasy. Having secured the money, he sought how he might deliver Jesus up, so as to answer the intention of those who had hired him. See what wicked contrivances many have in their sinful pursuits, to compass their designs conveniently; but such conveniences will prove mischiefs in the end.

3. Some have supposed that Christ was anointed twice at Bethany. The view taken by Doddridge, that there was only one anointing, and that it took place six days before the passover, on his arrival at Bethany, appears most correct. The ointment was of a very precious description, and may have been left from that provided at the interment of Lazarus, for there appears to be no doubt that it was done by Mary, the sister of Lazarus; see note, John 12. It was a valuable unguent, perhaps a confection of nard and other ingredients; the vessel containing it was a cruse, or small vase of alabaster.

§ 121, 122, 124. Ver. 12-21. *Jesus prepares to keep the passover—He declares that Judas would betray him.*

The circumstances respecting the keeping of the passover are here more fully recorded than by St. Matthew. Nothing could be less the result of human foresight than the events here specified. But our Lord knows every circumstance respecting us before it comes to pass; and if we carefully compare our experience with his words, we shall be fully convinced that he does all things concerning us in wisdom and goodness, according to the counsel of his own will; and that whatever we possess, is most profitable to us when employed in the Redeemer's service. If we admit him, he will dwell in our hearts;

and if we consecrate our houses to him, he will there manifest his presence.

As the disciples were eating the passover, Christ told them that which would mix trembling with their joys. He tells them that they must soon lose him. The Son of man goes, as it is written of him. It was written in the counsels of God, and written in the prophecies of the Old Testament, not one jot or tittle of either can fall to the ground.

They were pleasing themselves with the society of each other; but Christ further casts a damp upon their joy, telling them, One of you that eateth with me shall betray me. They began to be sorrowful; they began to be suspicious of themselves. They do not say, "I am sure it is not I," but, "Lord, is it I?" see if there be such a way of wickedness in me, such a root of bitterness; pluck up that root, and stop up that way.

Perhaps Judas encouraged himself with this thought, that his Master had often said he must be betrayed. But Christ declares that this will be no excuse. The Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him, as a lamb to the slaughter; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. God's permitting the sins of men, and bringing glory to himself out of them, neither necessitates their sins, nor determines to them; nor will this be any excuse of the sin, or mitigation of the punishment. Christ was delivered indeed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; but, notwithstanding that, it was with wicked hands that he was crucified and slain, Acts 2. 23.

§ 126, 128, 124, 131, 125. Ver. 22—31. *The Lord's supper instituted.*

Here is the account of the institution of the Lord's supper.

1. It was instituted when they were sufficiently fed with the paschal lamb: in the Lord's supper there is no bodily repast intended. It is food for the soul, and therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a sign, is enough. But much of the doctrine and duty of the Lord's supper is illustrated by the law of the passover, Exod. 12; for old testament institutions, though they do not bind us, yet instruct.

2. It was instituted by the example and the practice of our Master himself, intended for his disciples; it has the obligation of a law; to remain in full force, power, and virtue, till his second coming.

3. It was instituted with blessing and giving of thanks; the gifts of common providence are to be so received, 1 Tim. 4. 4, much more gifts of special grace.

4. It was instituted to be a memorial of Christ's death; therefore he brake the bread, to show how it pleased the Lord to bruise him; and he called the wine, which is the blood of the grape, the blood of the new testament. Frequent mention is made of the blood, the precious blood, as the price of our redemption; for the blood is the life, and made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11, 14. It is called the blood of the new testament; for the covenant of grace became a testament, of force by the death of Christ, the Testator, Heb. 9.

16. It is said to be shed for many, to justify many, Isa. 53. 11, to bring many sons to glory, Heb. 2. 10. It was sufficient for many, being of infinite value; we read of a great multitude which no man could number, who had all washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7. 9, 14; and still it is a fountain opened. How comfortable is this to poor, repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is shed for many! If for many, why not for me? If for sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, the chief of sinners, then why not for me?

5. It was instituted to ratify the covenant made with us in Christ, and as a sign of the conveyance of those benefits which were purchased for us by his death; therefore he brake the bread to them, and said, Take, eat of it: he gave the cup to them, and ordered them to drink of it. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves, let it be meat and drink to your souls, strengthening and refreshing to you, and the support and comfort of your spiritual life.

6. It was instituted to be an earnest and foretaste of the happiness of heaven, and thereby to put us out of taste for the pleasures and delights of sense. No one, having tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires sensual ones, for he saith, The spiritual is better, Luke 5. 39; but every one that hath tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires eternal ones, for he saith, Those are better still. Lord, hasten the day when I shall enjoy them in the kingdom of God, where they shall be for ever new, and in perfection.

7. It was closed with a hymn. Though Christ was in the midst of his enemies, yet he did not, for fear of them, omit this



sweet duty of singing psalms. Gospel times often are spoken of in the Old Testament as times of rejoicing, and praise is expressed by singing.

Christ here foretells that in his sufferings he should be deserted by all his disciples. He foresees the falls and miscarriages of his disciples, and yet does not refuse to acknowledge them. And the greater our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by holy ordinances. Christ tells them that they would be offended in him, would begin to question whether he were the Messiah or not, when they saw him overpowered by his enemies. Though the great Shepherd passed through his sufferings without one false step, yet his followers often have been scattered by the comparatively small measure of sufferings allotted to them, this has been exactly proportioned to the degree in which they have relied on themselves, and formed resolutions in their own strength. The smiting of the shepherd is often the scattering of the sheep. But he encourages them, promising that they shall return, both to their duty and to their comfort.

Peter supposed himself stronger than others, so as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and to stand, though nobody stood by him. How natural it is for us to think well of ourselves, and trust our own hearts! Christ tells him that he will do worse than any of them. They will all desert him, but Peter will deny him; not once, but thrice, and that presently. He stands to his promise; if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee; and, no doubt, Peter thought as he said. Judas did not say anything like this. He sinned by contrivance, Peter by surprise; he devised the wickedness, Mic. 2. 1, Peter was overtaken in this fault, Gal. 6. 1. But it was ill done of Peter thus to answer his Master. If he had said, with fear and trembling, Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil, it might have been prevented; but being acquitted from their fear of betraying Christ, the disciples were now secure.

The circumstances of Peter's self-confidence and dreadful fall are related with peculiar force by St. Mark, who is thought to have penned his gospel under Peter's direction, while those of his repentance are more slightly touched upon.

26. Probably the usual hymn, called the Hallel, which was sung at the passover, consisting of Psalms 113 to 118. An account of the celebration of the passover, and the institution of the last supper, is given in a general note.

§ 131. Ver. 38-42. *Christ's agony in the garden.*

Christ here enters upon his sufferings, and begins with those which were the sorest of all—those in his soul. He retired for prayer. He had lately prayed with his disciples, now he appoints them to withdraw, while he intercedes with his Father upon what related peculiarly to himself. Praying with our families will not excuse the neglect of secret worship. Even into that retirement he took with him Peter, and James, and John, witnesses of this part of his humiliation. These three had boasted most of their ability and willingness to suffer with him. Christ takes them to witness how severe the struggle, to convince them that they knew not what they said. It is fit that those who are most confident, should first be made sensible of their folly and weakness.

There he began to be sorely amazed, words not used in Matthew, but very significant. The terrors of God set themselves in array against him, and he allowed himself the actual and intense contemplation of them. Never was sorrow like unto his at that time. Yet there was not the least disorder or irregularity in this commotion of his spirits; for he had no corrupt nature to mix with them, as we have. Pure water in a clean glass, though ever so much stirred, continues clear; and so it was with Christ.

We may be assured that our Lord's agony was in some mysterious way connected with the offering of himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and the procuring redemption to mankind.—(75.)

When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said, He departed from him for a season, Luke 4. 13. Finding that he could not by his flatteries allure Christ into sin, Satan would try by his terrors to affright him into it and so make void his design.

Christ said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful. He was made sin for us, and therefore was thus sorrowful; he fully knew the malignity of the sins for which he was to suffer; and having the highest degrees of love to God, who was offended by them, and of love to man, who was endangered by them, now those were set in order before him, no marvel that his soul was exceeding sorrowful. Now

he was made to serve with our sins, and was thus wearied with our iniquities. He was made a curse for us; the curses of the law were transferred to him as our surety and representative. And when his soul was thus exceeding sorrowful, he did, as it were, yield to them, until by his death he had satisfied for sin, and so for ever abolished the curse. He now tasted death, not as if he did but taste it, for he drank up even the dregs of the cup; yet it did not go down at once, but he tasted all the bitterness of it. This was that fear which the apostle speaks of, Heb. 5. 7, the natural fear of pain and death, which human nature startles at.

The consideration of Christ's sufferings in his soul, and his sorrows for us, should embitter our sins. Can we ever entertain favourable, or even slight thoughts of sin, when we see the painful impression sin, though but imputed, made upon the Lord Jesus? Shall that sit light upon our souls, which sat so heavy upon his? Was Christ in such agony for our sins, and shall we never be in agony about them? How should we look upon him whom we have pressed, whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness? It becomes us to be exceeding sorrowful for sin, because Christ was so, and never to make a mock at it. As Christ thus suffered for sin, let us arm ourselves with the same mind.

It should sweeten our sorrows. If our souls are at any time exceeding sorrowful, through the afflictions of this present time, let us remember that our Master was so before us, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Why should we desire to drive away sorrow, when Christ for our sakes submitted to it, thereby not only made it tolerable, but made it profitable, nay, put sweetness into it, and made it comfortable. Blessed Paul was sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing. If we are exceeding sorrowful, it is but unto death; that will be the end of all our sorrows, if Christ be ours.

He ordered his disciples to keep with him, not because he needed their help, but because he would have them receive instruction. Being in an agony, he fell upon his face, teaching us to humble ourselves before God. As *Man*, he deprecates his sufferings, that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. This short, but sharp affliction, that which I am now this hour to enter upon, let man's

salvation be, if possible, accomplished without it. We have the words recorded, *Abba, Father*. The Syriac word is here retained, which Christ used; it signifies Father, in a way of peculiar affection and confidence, to intimate what emphasis our Lord Jesus, in his sorrows, laid upon it, and would have us to lay. As *Mediator*, he acquiesced in the will of God. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. I know the matter is settled, and cannot be altered, I must suffer and die, I bid it welcome.

He roused his disciples who were asleep. This carelessness was a preface of their further offence in deserting him. He particularly upbraided Peter with his drowsiness. He did not require him to watch all night with him, but only for one hour. It aggravates our faintness and short continuance in Christ's service, that he does not overtask nor weary us with it, Isa. 43. 23.

As those whom Christ loves he rebukes when they do amiss, so those whom he rebukes he counsels and comforts. The consideration of the weakness and infirmity of our flesh, should engage and quicken us to prayer and watchfulness, when entering into temptation.

He came the second time, and found his disciples asleep again. See how the infirmities of Christ's disciples return, notwithstanding their resolutions, and overpower them, notwithstanding their resistance. What clogs these bodies of ours are to our souls! This should make us long for that blessed state in which they shall be no more our encumbrance! The third time, they were bid to sleep if they would; it is enough, you have had warning enough to keep awake, but would not take it; now you shall see what little reason you have to be secure. Now the hour is come, in which I knew you would all forsake me, even take your course. The Son of man is now betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go and meet the enemy, for lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand; I must not think of escaping. When we see trouble at the door, we are concerned to get ready for it.

Did we properly consider what passed in Gethsemane; did we duly consider the amazement and anguish of the great Redeemer when his soul was sorrowful, even to death, through the load of our guilt which he willingly bore; did we advert to his strong crying and tears, yet his

victorious resignation—surely reflecting thereon would convince us of the evil of sin, the awful justice of God, the love of the Saviour, the vanity of the world, the impotence of man's malice, and the danger and helpless state of our souls. And this would have powerful effect in rendering us humble, dependent, and thankful in the hour of trial, exciting us also to watchfulness and prayer, lest we should be borne down by temptation. But alas, even believers often contemplate this affecting scene in a drowsy manner, and instead of being ready to die with Christ, they are not prepared to watch with him one hour!

32. The garden of Gethsemane has repeatedly been described by modern travellers as in a wretched and barren state. *Cyrus* recently says, "This is of all gardens the most interesting and hallowed, but how neglected and decayed! It is surrounded by a kind of low hedge, but the soil is bare; no verdure grows on it save six fine venerable olive trees, which have stood there for many centuries."

33. The word translated "to be very heavy," is a much stronger term than the preceding one, and signifies to be almost overwhelmed, and to become insensible with grief.—*Bloomfield*.

§ 132. Ver. 43-52. *Christ betrayed and apprehended.*

We have here the seizing of our Lord Jesus by the officers of the chief priests. There is no wickedness, no villany, but some men may be found that will not scruple to be employed. At the head of this rabble was Judas, one of the twelve, one of those who had been intimately conversant with our Lord Jesus, had prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils; and yet betrayed him! It is no new thing for a fair and plausible profession to end in shameful and fatal apostasy.

The chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, sent them. Because Christ appeared not as a temporal prince, but set up a spiritual kingdom, and preached repentance, reformation, and a holy life; and directed men's thoughts, and affections, and aims, to another world; therefore they sought to destroy him. They laid hands on him, rude and violent hands. Peter wounded one of the assailants. It is easier to fight for Christ than to die for him; but Christ's good soldiers overcome, not by taking away other people's lives, but by laying down their own, Rev. 12. 11.

Christ shows them the absurdity of their proceedings. They came out against him; as against a thief, whereas he was innocent of any crime. These officers of the chief priests being retainers to the

temple, must have heard his sermons there. By his fruits he was known to be a good tree; why then did they come out against him as a thief? They came to take him privately, whereas he was neither ashamed nor afraid to appear publicly in the temple. By coming with swords and staves, they represented him to the people as a dangerous, turbulent man. He reconciled himself to this injurious, ignominious treatment, by referring to the Old Testament predictions of the Messiah. See the regard Christ had to the scriptures. And see what use we are to make of the Old Testament; we must search for Christ: as the history of the New Testament expounds the prophecies of the Old, so the prophecies of the Old Testament illustrate the history of the New.

All Christ's disciples hereupon forsook him, and fled. Let not those that suffer for Christ, think it strange if they are thus deserted; they are not better than their Master, nor can expect to be better used by their enemies, or by their friends. But there is great difference between faulty disciples and hypocrites. The latter grow hardened in sin, and seek to conceal their crimes by attending on ordinances; they presumptuously call Christ Master, and express great affection for him, yet betray him to his enemies. Thus they hasten their own destruction.

Who the young man, mentioned ver. 51, was, we know not, nor is it any matter, except to note that it shows how shamefully and violently the wicked apprehenders of Jesus raged, in seeking to apprehend a man unknown to them, and unsuspected of any part in the matter. (58.)

51. *Grotius* considers that this young man was not of the company of the apostles, but from some place near the garden. Being roused by the noise of the soldiery he ran out hastily to see what was passing. *Ward* says, It is not uncommon for a Hindoo, when his clothes are seized by an antagonist, to leave his garment in the hand of his opponent, and slip away naked.

§ 133, 134. Ver. 53-65. *Christ before the high priest.*

We have here Christ's condemnation before the great sanhedrim, of which the high priest was president; the same Caiaphas who had lately adjudged it expedient he should be put to death, guilty or not guilty. Christ is hurried away to his house in the dead of the night; the chief priests and elders, and scribes, who were in the secret, were assembled, ready to receive their prey.

Peter followed; but the high priest's fire-side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company for Peter; it was his entrance into a temptation. Great diligence was used to procure false witnesses against Christ. The chief priests and elders were by the law intrusted with the prosecuting and punishing of false witnesses, Deut. 19. 16; yet were now foremost in that crime. Jesus was at length charged with words spoken some years before; these, as they were represented, seemed to threaten the temple, which they had regarded with idolatrous veneration; but the witnesses did not agree. Their testimony was not sufficient, nor equal to the charge of a capital crime, by the utmost stretch of their law.

Christ was urged to be his own accuser, under pretence of justice. Still he answered nothing, that he might set us an example of patience under calumnies and false accusations: when we are reviled, let us not revile again, 1 Pet. 2. 23. And of prudence; when a man shall be made an offender for a word, Isa. 29. 21. But when he was asked whether he was the Christ, he confessed, and denied not, that he was. He was asked, Art thou the Son of the Blessed? that is, the Son of God. The Jews, when they named God, generally added, Blessed for ever; thence The Blessed is the title of God, a peculiar title, and applied to Christ, Rom. 9. 5. And for the proof of his being the Son of God, he refers to his second coming; Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power; that Son of man who now appears mean and despicable, whom you see and trample upon, Isa. 53. 2, you shall shortly see and tremble before.

The high priest, upon this confession, denounced him as a blasphemer; they agreed that he was so, they all condemned him to be guilty of death. They set themselves to make sport with him. If they did not think it below them to abuse Christ, shall we think any thing below us, by which we may honour him?

In these outrages we have clear proof of man's enmity to God, and of God's most free and unspeakable love to man. In the conduct of our suffering Lord we have the brightest pattern of meekness, fortitude, and compassion to sinners that the earth ever witnessed. We perceive also the evil of sin, and the nature of our christian calling, which is to follow the example of our blessed Saviour. Thus

may we look forward with comfort to the time when we shall see the Son of man coming in his glory; and hope to be numbered with his glorified saints, when his persecutors and enemies are driven into everlasting destruction.

56. "Were insufficient," *Campbell*. The high priests therefore proceeded to obtain a confession from our Lord himself.

62. Our Lord here refers to a passage in Daniel, which the Jews always considered as descriptive of the Messiah, and applied it to himself, which the Jews accounted as blasphemy.

65. In the east, when a criminal is condemned, it is usual to cover his face, Esth. 7. 8.

§ 133. Ver. 66—72. *Peter denies Christ.*

Peter's denying Christ began by keeping at a distance from him. Those that are shy of godliness, are in a fair way to deny Christ. It was occasioned by associating with the high priest's servants. Those who think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to suffer for him, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn in to sin against him.

The temptation was, his being charged as a disciple of Christ. It does not appear that he was in danger of being prosecuted as a criminal for it, but only of being ridiculed for it. The sin was very great; he denied Christ before men, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned him. Christ had often given notice to his disciples of his own sufferings. He had often told them that they must suffer for him; and yet Peter is so afraid upon the very first alarm, that he will lie and swear to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him: but now that he is deserted and despised, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was the worst of all.

Yet observe, his repentance was very speedy. Some observe that this evangelist, who wrote, as it is thought, by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of his sin as any of them, but more briefly of his sorrow, which Peter would not have to be magnified; he thought he could never sorrow enough for so great a sin.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; and let him that hath fallen think of these things, and of his own offences, and return to the Lord with weeping and supplication, seeking forgiveness, trusting to be restored to the

joy of salvation, and thenceforth established by the Holy Spirit.

70. The Galileans spoke a corrupt dialect of Syriac, confusing and changing many of the letters and sounds. This may have arisen from their being much in communication with other nations. Probably it led to Peter's detection. *Lightfoot* gives several instances of the confusion produced by their pronunciation. When a certain Galilean asked, Whose is *Imbur*, (this lamb,) he pronounced it so that the hearers knew not whether he meant, an ass, wine, wool, or lamb. A Galilean woman meaning to say, "Come, and I will feed you with milk," confounded the letters of the words, so that they signified, "My neighbour, a lion shall eat you."

The denials of Peter appear to have been as follows: 1. To the damsel who kept the door, and let him enter. 2. On being charged by the servants at the fire. 3. To the kinsman of Malchus, who recollected seeing Peter in the garden. These three are noticed by St. John as three denials; the other evangelists consider these, being all made at the fire, as one general denial, and go on to trace others. The second general denial was in the porch, where several charged Peter. The place of the third is not specified, but it was in the room or court where Jesus was, as he turned and looked upon Peter. They that stood by joined in the charge, and then Peter began to curse and to swear that he knew not his Lord. See *Pilkington* and *Townsend*. Others have observed that there are three direct denials or renunciations of our Lord; the rest were denials of Peter's discipleship. Much has been said respecting the cock crowing, whether it signifies the actual sound, or the time denoted by it, there is no doubt that the crowing of a cock might have been heard by Peter at Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER XV.

Ver 1-47. M. 27. L. 23. { J. 18 33-40  
J. 19 1-3.  
J. 19. 16-42.

§ 135, 137 Ver. 1-14. *Christ before Pilate.*

The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that war against Christ and thy soul, are up early; how long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?

They bound Christ. He was to be the great Sacrifice, and sacrifices must be bound. *Ps. 118: 27.* It is good for us often to remember the bonds of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was bound for us. They led him through Jerusalem, to expose him to contempt, who, but a few days before, had been held in veneration. Their delivering him to the Roman power may signify that the promise, the covenant, and the graces of God, and the visible church state, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up the King,

they do, in effect, deliver up the kingdom of God, which is therefore, as it were, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation.

The priests were very eager in their accusation, but Christ answered nothing. Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should do so, yet still he stood mute. He gave Pilate a direct answer, but would not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alleged were notoriously false, and Pilate himself was convinced they were so.

It was the custom at the feast to release a prisoner. The people expected and demanded that Pilate should do as he had before done to them. It was easy to see, comparing the eagerness of the persecutors with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not the guilt of Jesus, but his goodness, that they were provoked at. Therefore Pilate thought that he might appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would deliver Jesus out of the priests' hands. He proposed an expedient for their doing it without danger of an uproar. Let them demand him to be released, and Pilate readily will do it. But the people clamoured to have Christ put to death, and particularly to have him crucified. When Pilate objected, Why, what evil has he done? they did not answer him, but cried out the more exceedingly, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, Crucify him! Crucify him! But let us judge of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prejudice by common report. It induced Pilate to condemn Christ for fear of displeasing them. Our Lord Jesus, dying as a sacrifice for the sins of many, fell a sacrifice to the rage of many.

The consideration that no one ever was so cruelly and contemptuously treated, by men of every rank, as the only perfectly wise, holy, and excellent Person that ever appeared on earth, leads the serious mind to strong views of human depravity and enmity to God. These views, being applied to ourselves with the recollection that we all are such by nature, must exceedingly lead to self-abasement before God; while the view of his stupendous love in delivering up his well-beloved Son to this ignominious and cruel death, and making him, but making his soul a sacrifice for the sins of rebels and sinners, should cause the broken heart

to overflow with wonder and grateful joy. Did we more constantly contemplate those scenes, we should not only derive peace and comfort from the Saviour's atoning blood, but should learn to copy his character in our lives, and more to abhor all those evil dispositions which marked the conduct of his persecutors. We should always find arguments, encouragements, and motives to live to his glory who died for us and rose again.

1. The meetings of the Jewish sanhedrim could not be held till the morning. The courts of the temple were not open at night, and justice could only be administered in the day-time. Much has been said on the question, how far the Jews possessed the power of inflicting the punishment of death. *Lightfoot* mentions many circumstances which show that the authority of the council in capital matters was not taken away, but was gradually, and from various causes, relinquished by the Jews, till it lapsed into the hands of the Romans. As to the case of our Lord, it was not lawful to put any man to death on the passover, they feared the people too much to detain Jesus in prison, so they delivered him to Pilate, accusing him of sedition, and intimidated the Roman governor, though unwilling, to take cognizance of the offence, and thereby procured Christ to be put to death according to the Roman custom; thus the predictions respecting our Lord were fulfilled.—See *Townsend*.

6. It is uncertain when this custom began, but the most probable opinion is, that it was introduced by the Romans themselves. This deviation from the strictness of the law, shows how much the appointed Levitical institutions had been relaxed.

§ 138, 140. Ver. 15—21. *Christ condemned and led to be crucified.*

Pilate, to gratify the Jews' malice, released Barabbas unto them, who was a scandal and plague of their nation, and delivered Jesus to be crucified, who was the glory and blessing of their nation.

Christ was crucified: that was, 1. A bloody death and without blood there is no remission, Heb. 9. 22. Christ was to lay down his life for us, and therefore shed his blood. In every sacrifice of propitiation, special order was given for the pouring out of the blood, and the sprinkling of it before the Lord. That Christ might answer these types, he shed his blood. 2. It was a painful death; the pains were very severe. Christ died, so that he might feel himself die, because he was to be both the priest and the sacrifice; so that he might be dying in dying, because he was to wash the soul an offering for sin. Christ would meet death in its greatest terror, and thus conquer it. 3. It was a shameful death, the

death of slaves and of the vilest malefactors; so it was accounted among the Romans. Thus the cross and the shame are put together. God having been dishonoured by the sin of man, Christ makes satisfaction, not only by divesting himself for a time of the honours due to his Divine nature, but by submitting to the greatest disgrace the human nature could be loaded with. 4. It was a cursed death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law, Deut. 21. 23. He that is hanged on a tree, is 'accursed of God,' is under a particular mark of God's displeasure.

Pilate, to gratify his Roman soldiers, delivered Jesus to them, to be abused and spitefully treated, while they were preparing for the execution. They mocked our Lord Jesus as a king, as in the high priest's hall the servants had mocked him as a prophet and Saviour. Do kings wear robes of purple or scarlet? They clothed him with purple. Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ? Do kings wear crowns? They platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head. A crown of straw would have been banter; but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. Let us be taught by these thorns to hate sin, and be uneasy under it. If we are at any time afflicted with a thorn in the flesh, let it be our comfort, that our great High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Are kings attended with the acclamations of their subjects? That also is mimicked. Kings have sceptres, as marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity; to resemble that, they put a reed in his right hand. Those who despise the authority of the Lord Jesus, who regard not either the precepts of his word, or the threatenings of his wrath, do the same, in effect; such is the indignity they do to him. Subjects, when they swore allegiance, were wont to kiss their sovereign; but instead of that, they spit upon him. Kings used to be addressed upon the knee; and thus they did in scorn. We must become liable to contumacious and scornful treatment, as our Lord Jesus was, if we are to share his shame and triumph. Peter, John, saw the thorn to Christ, but do not pierce the soul; who draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips,

while their hearts are far from him, put the like affront upon him.

The soldiers led Jesus away to the place of execution. He was led forth with the workers of iniquity, though he did no sin. Lest his death, under the load of his cross, should prevent further cruelties, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross, who passed by, coming out of the country or out of the fields, not thinking of any such matter. We must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly. The cross was a very troublesome unwieldy load, but he that carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have his name recorded in the book of God, though otherwise obscure; so that, wherever this gospel is preached, there shall this be told for a memorial of him. In like manner, though no affliction, no cross, for the present, be joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yields a crown of glory to them that are exercised thereby.

The sufferings of the meek and holy Redeemer, ever are a source of instruction to the lively believer, of which, in his best hours, he cannot be weary. The silence, meekness, and patience of the holy Jesus, amidst all his complicated sufferings, and the varied contempt and cruelty of his numerous enemies, should cause us to exclaim. Did Jesus thus suffer, and shall I, a vile sinner, fret or repine? shall I indulge resentment, or utter reproaches and threats because of the troubles and injuries I meet with?

15. The Romans inflicted scourging before crucifixion or any other capital punishment. These sufferings were inflicted on many of the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem. See *Josephus*.

17. The crown is supposed by *Hasselquist* to have been made of the pliant branches of a tree called *naba* or *nabka* by the Arabs. It grows commonly in the east, has many small and sharp spines, and the leaves much resemble those of ivy. Had the Jews only intended to insult Jesus, without adding to his sufferings, a crown of straw would have answered their purpose.

31. The condemned criminal, among the Romans, was compelled to bear his own cross, or the transverse beam, and on his way was urged forward and loaded with every species of wanton cruelty. But our Lord was so exhausted by his sufferings, that they compelled Simon to assist him. St. Luke, writing for the Gentiles of Asia, only mentions Simon, who probably was known to them. Mark, writing to the Romans, notices that Simon was the father of Rufus, who appears to have been a member of that church, Rom. 16. 13. The cross was not so high as is usually represented in pictures.

§ 140 141. Ver. 22-32. *The crucifixion of Christ.*

The place where our Lord Jesus was crucified, was called Golgotha—the place

of a scull; it was the common place of execution, for he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. The time when he was crucified was the third hour, according to the Jews' way of reckoning; that is, about nine in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. When he was nailed to the cross they added several things to its ignominy.

It being the custom to give wine mingled with myrrh to persons who were to be put to death, Jesus tasted it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness, but not the cordial of it. The soldiers cast lots for his garments, making themselves merry with his misery while he was hanging in pain. They set a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him both justice and honour; The King of the Jews! Here was no crime alleged, but his sovereignty owned. Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ as a baffled King, or upon the Jews, as a people that deserved no better a King than he seemed to be: however, Christ crucified is King of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even when he hung on the cross, he was a King, conquering his and his people's enemies, and triumphing over them, Col. 2. 15. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a King, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed.

They crucified two thieves with him, and him in the midst, as the worst of the three; so great dishonour did they thereby intend him. Some who have been imprisoned for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than of any other grievance of their prison. In the midst of such our Lord Jesus was crucified; while he lived he had at times associated with sinners, to do them good; now, when he died, he was joined with them for the same purpose; for he came into the world, and went out of it, to save sinners, even the chief, and he saved one of these. See Luke 23. 40, 43. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures thereby, Isa. 53. 12. It was foretold he should be numbered with the transgressors, because he was made sin for us.

The spectators added to Christ's misery, by insulting over him. Thus the devil showed the utmost rage against him, and

thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him. Even those who passed by, that were no way concerned, railed on him, as if divested of all humanity. They expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him. They triumph, as if now that they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his destroying the temple; whereas the temple of which he spake was now destroying, and he did within three days build it up: and the temple of which they spake, he destroyed by men, that were his sword and his hand, not many years after. When secure sinners think danger is over, it is most ready to seize them. The chief priests, by their office, should have compassion even on those who are out of the way, should be tender of the suffering and dying, Heb. 5. 1, 2; but they talked to the grief of him whom God had smitten, Psa. 69: 26; they mocked him. They challenge him to come down from the cross, if he could. Let them see that, and they would believe; but they would not believe, though he gave them a more convincing sign when he came up from the grave. Even they that were crucified with Christ reviled him; one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

The contemplation of the whole human race, as all lying under deserved condemnation, and exposed to everlasting misery, except as Jesus opened the gates of life and salvation to believers, must tend to reconcile us to the scorn and hatred of the world, mortify us to its interests and pleasures, and render us contented in trials and obscurity.

With what earnestness will the man that firmly believes these truths seek for salvation! With what gratitude will he receive even the dawning hope of forgiveness and eternal life, as purchased for him by the sufferings and death of the Son of God! and with what godly sorrow will he mourn over the sins which have crucified the Lord of Glory! Hence attention to the one thing needful; and all other interests and employments are made subordinate to devoted obedience to Christ. Hence abhorrence of sin, which renders it the great burden of a believer's life. Hence he is induced diligently to use every means that may tend to weaken and destroy all evil from his heart.

32. Golgotha was a rising ground or knoll, so called from being strewed with the skulls of malefactors executed there.

33. All the particulars recorded concerning the crucifixion of our Lord, minutely agree with the proceedings usual among the Romans in the inflicting that dreadful punishment. It was customary to give the sufferer a stupefying potion; this was offered our Lord, but he was ready to suffer to the utmost, and refused any thing which would cause an unnatural stupefaction or oblivion. In the latter times of the Jewish state, wine, with incense or other drugs in it, was always given to a criminal to stupefy him, it was so general that the word cup is sometimes put for death itself, as Matt. 26. 39, 42. The custom is said to have originated in the precept, Prov. 31. 6. Matthew, 27. 34, speaks of vinegar mingled with gall being offered to Jesus. *Grotius* shows that the inferior acid wine used by the soldiers and people was called both wine and vinegar. The word translated gall is applied to any bitter; thus it is not difficult to reconcile the accounts; and the vinegar mentioned by Luke seems to have been a separate potion offered in derision.

36. The variations in the inscription placed on the cross are thus accounted for by *Townson*. He supposes that it slightly varied in each language, and that the different evangelists have recorded it accordingly. St. Matthew probably states the Hebrew, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." As the word Jesus means Saviour, Pilate might use it here in derision. John states the Greek. As the allusion just mentioned would not hold in that language, "The Nazarene," was inserted instead, denominating the Jewish king from a city that nation held in contempt. The Latin, as in Mark, "The king of the Jews." Neither of the words, Jesus, or Nazarene, is here retained. There would be a difficulty in giving them in Latin, and it was thought below the Roman dignity to introduce foreign words in a public document. Luke also gives the Latin inscription, merely adding, "This is," which had a common reference to them all, or he may have added it as completing the sense.

Ver. 33—41. *The death of Christ.*

There was a thick darkness over the land from noon until three in the afternoon. The Jews were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of righteousness, which was now setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness? It was the power of darkness that they were now under, the works of darkness that they were now doing; and dark indeed should their doom justly be, who loved darkness rather than light.

Toward the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus, in the agony of his soul, cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The darkness signified the cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. He complained of this more than any other thing; he did not complain of his disciples' forsaking him, but of his



Father's. In this especially he was made sin for us; our iniquities had deserved wrath upon the soul, Rom. 2. 7; and it could not but bear hard upon Him who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was always his delight. The fire that should have fallen upon the sinner, if God had not been pacified, fell upon the sacrifices of old, as a token that they were accepted; it now fell upon Christ, and extorted from him this loud and bitter cry. When Paul was to be offered as a sacrifice for the service of saints, he could joy and rejoice, Phil. 2. 17; but it is another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for the sin of sinners.

Christ again cried with a loud voice, and so gave up the ghost. This loud voice signified great strength and ardency of affection. Though speech fails, that we cannot cry with a loud voice, as Christ did, yet if God be the Strength of the heart, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly dead; his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay.

At the same instant that Christ died upon Calvary, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. This spake terror to the unbelieving Jews; it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after. It speaks much comfort to all believing christians, for it signified the consecrating and laying open to us of a new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The centurion who had the care of the execution, was convinced, and confessed that this Jesus was the Son of God, ver. 39. In all other sad spectacles of this kind he never observed, that one who had strength to cry so loud should yet immediately give up the ghost; this made him wonder, and he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. And the confidence with which, in these circumstances, Christ openly addressed God as his Father, and committed his soul into his hands, seems greatly to have influenced the centurion.

The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief. Mary Magdalene owed all her comfort to his power and goodness, in gratitude for which she thought she could never do enough for him.

Views of Christ crucified will reconcile the believer to the thoughts of death, that he may behold, love, and praise, as he

ought, that Saviour who was wounded and pierced, to save him from the wrath to come. Let us then often meditate on scenes which have such blessed efficacy in producing holy and benevolent affections, which tend to form our characters into conformity to Jesus; and let us, especially do so when tempted to impatience under trials, peevishness under contempt and reproach, when anxious about worldly things, or desiring sinful indulgences.

With this object before us, can it be too much to shed tears for those sins for which the Son of God shed his precious blood? or to pour out our prayers for those blessings for which he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors? or to bear hardship for him who bare the wrath of God for us? All we can suffer must be light compared with his agonies; yet how often are we weary and faint in our minds under our light afflictions, instead of being thankful that we are not in the pit of destruction, as justly we might have been.

33. This darkness was wholly miraculous. The passover, at which time Christ was crucified, was celebrated at the full moon, when it is impossible for a natural eclipse of the sun to take place. It does not appear to have been a total darkness, nor to have extended beyond Judea.

34. These words are Syro-Chaldaic, the dialect then usually spoken in Judea. *Blountfield* considers that our Lord meant to turn the attention of his disciples to Psalm 22, and to signify that he was now accomplishing what is there predicted of the Messiah. It is supposed they were Hellenistic Jews who mocked him, and referred to the general expectation of Elijah's returning to life again at the coming of the Messiah.

36. Vinegar and water was the usual drink of Roman soldiers. A sufferer on the cross would experience excessive thirst, and this being at hand seems to have been given to Jesus; hereby fulfilling Ps. 69. 21.

40. There were two parties of women who attended the cross and sepulchre of our Lord. See the general note on the resurrection.

§ 142. Ver. 42—47. *Christ's body obtained by Joseph of Arimathea, and buried.*

We are here attending the burial of our Lord Jesus. O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it!

The body of Christ was begged. Those that hurried him to the cross, designed he should make his grave with the wicked; but God designed he should make it with the rich, Isa. 53. 9, and so he did. We are here told why such haste was made with the funeral. The Jews were more strict in the observation of the sabbath than of any other feast; and therefore, though this day was itself a feast-day, yet they

observed it more religiously as the eve of the sabbath, when they prepared their houses and tables for the splendid and joyful solemnizing of the sabbath-day. Such work is to be done, and such advantages are to be gained on the sabbath-day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it before it begins.

Joseph of Arimathea was one who waited for the kingdom of God. Those who hope for an interest in its privileges, must show forwardness to own Christ's cause, when it seems to be crushed. Even among the honourable counsellors there was one at least, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this service, when none of Christ's immediate disciples could, or durst undertake it, having neither purse, interest, nor courage for it.

Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous. Pilate doubted, so some understand it, whether he were yet dead or not. But the centurion could assure him of it. There was a special providence, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say Jesus was alive, and so to take away the truth of his resurrection; and so fully was this determined, that such an objection was never made.

Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. He brought fine linen to wrap the body in. In respect to Christ; it becomes us to be generous, and to serve him with the best that can be got, not with that which can be got with the least trouble. He took down the body, mangled as it was, and wrapt it in the linen as a treasure of great worth. He laid it in a sepulchre of his own, in a private place. He rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury.

Some of the women beheld where Jesus was laid, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it before. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should know of his sepulchre, Deut. 34. 6, because the respects of the people towards his person were to die with him; but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to rise again. The care taken of Christ's body speaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body the church.

Even when it seems to be a dead body, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whose dust there is a covenant which shall not be forgotten.

He will not forsake those who trust in him, and call upon him; death, deprived of its sting, will soon end the believer's sorrows, as it ended those of the Saviour. Then the way into the holiest will be open to his soul, as it was to his prayers, and he will soon be out of the reach of all his enemies. The dying words of the believer may leave a salutary impression on the minds of others, his memory may be honoured by those who despised him when living, his body will rest in the grave till the joyful resurrection. Thus he will be made more than a conqueror through Him that loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood. Lord, visit our souls with this salvation.

44. Our Lord died much sooner than was usual for persons who were crucified; but his state of exhaustion and extreme suffering accounts for it; and his own voluntary readiness to give up his life for his flock must not be forgotten; see note, John 19. 30.

The bodies of crucified criminals were often left on the cross; but it was not usual for the Romans to refuse an application from the friends of the deceased, particularly in Judea, where the law, Deut. 21. 23, required that the bodies of those criminals who were hanged on a tree should be buried before sunset.

46. The sepulchre consisted of a cave hollowed out in the rock, and, we may suppose, a small inclosure before it as usual in Jewish tombs.

## CHAPTER XVI.

V. 1-10. M. 28.1-8. L. 24.1-12. J. 20.1-18.  
V. 12, 13. L. 24.13-35.  
V. 14. L. 24.36-40. J. 20.19, 20.  
V. 15-18. M. 28.18-20. L. 24.41-49. J. 20.21-23.  
V. 19, 20. L. 24.50-53. Acts 1.9-12.

§ 144, 145. Ver. 1-8. *Christ's resurrection made known to the women.*

The women that had attended Christ visited his sepulchre. Nicodemus had brought a very large quantity of spices, but these good women did not think that enough. The respect which others have showed to Christ's name, should not hinder us from showing our respect to it. Their gracious love to Christ carried them to the sepulchre; and by the time they came thither, the difficulties were removed, both the stone which they knew of, and the guard which they knew not of. Those who are carried by a holy zeal, to seek Christ diligently, will find the difficulties that are in their way speedily vanish, and themselves helped beyond their expectation. And when we put ourselves to

trouble and expense, from love to Christ, we shall be accepted, though our endeavours are not successful.

Assurance was given them by an angel, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead. They entered into the sepulchre a little way, and saw that the body of Jesus was not where they left it. He who by his death undertook to pay our debt, had his satisfaction accepted for all the purposes for which it was intended, and an incontestable evidence was given that he was the Son of God.

The sight of the angel might justly have encouraged them, but they were affrighted. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own misapprehensions, proves a terror to us. The angel silences their fears by assuring them there was cause for triumph, but none for trembling. As angels rejoice in the conversion of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of saints. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. The inquiries of believing souls after Christ, have a particular regard to him as crucified, 1 Cor. 2. 2, that they may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being lifted up from the earth, is that which draws all men unto him. The angel speaks of Jesus as one that *was* crucified. The thing is past; ye must not dwell so much upon the sad circumstances of his crucifixion as to be unapt to believe the joyful news of his resurrection. He was crucified in weakness, yet that does not hinder his being raised in power. He *was* crucified, but he *is* glorified. He *is* risen, he is not here, not dead, but alive again; hereafter you will see him, but you may here see the place where he was laid.

They must tell the disciples that he is risen. They look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves as ready to fall into the hands of their enemies. Go quickly to them, tell them that their Master is risen; this will keep them from despair. Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, now he is in his exalted state. Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that lament after the Lord Jesus.

They must tell Peter. This is particularly noticed by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. He is particularly named, Tell Peter, it will be most welcome to him; for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than

to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for their justification. He will be afraid, lest the joy of this good news do not belong to him; therefore go to Peter by name. A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

The Lord Jesus appointed them all, and Peter by name, to meet him in Galilee. All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointment. Christ will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing, in every place where he records his name. In all meetings between Christ and his disciples, he is the most forward. He goes before you.

The women ran with all the haste they could to the disciples. See how much we are enemies to ourselves and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with what Christ hath said to us. Christ had often told them, that the third day he would rise again; had they given him due credit, they would have come to the sepulchre, expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance, and not with terror and amazement. Being ordered to tell the disciples, the women showed not any thing of it to any person they met, for they were afraid. Disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ and to the souls of men, which, if faith and the joy of faith were strong, we might do.

§ 146, 147, 150. Ver. 9—13. *Christ appears to Mary Magdalene and other disciples.*

Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene in the garden; see John 20. 14. Much was forgiven her, and much done for her, and she loved much; and this honour Christ did her, that she was the first who saw him after his resurrection. She brings notice of what she had seen to the disciples. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should mourn and lament, John 16. 20. It was evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But comfort returned, as Christ had promised. Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to comfort disciples that are mourners, by communicating our experiences to them—what we have seen of Christ. They heard that he was alive,

and had been seen of her, yet they believed not. Had they believed his own frequent predictions, they would not have been now so backward to believe the report.

He appeared to two disciples as they went into the country. This refers, no doubt, to what passed between Christ and the two disciples going to Emmaus, Luke 24. 13. These two witnesses being satisfied themselves, were desirous to give their brethren the same satisfaction, that they might be comforted as themselves. This did not gain credit with all. They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. There was a wise providence that the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given gradually, and admitted cautiously, that the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterward might be the more satisfying. We have the more reason to believe those who themselves believed so slowly, only upon a full conviction.

How slowly do we admit the consolations which the word of God holds forth ! Our faith is apt to be weak and wavering ; therefore while Christ comforts his people by manifesting himself to them as he doth not to the world, he often sees it needful to rebuke and correct them for hardness of heart in distrusting his promise, as well as in not obeying his holy precepts. Yet he will heal the backslidings of his people, love them freely, and again employ them in his service.

13. Luke states that some of the assembly believed that the Lord had risen ; there are several passages where what is spoken of all, is to be understood only of a part.

§ 159. Ver. 14—18. *Christ's commission to the apostles.*

The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not, may justly be upbraided with their unbelief ; and it is not owing to any deficiency in the proofs.

Our blessed Lord renewed his choice of the eleven as his apostles, and commissioned them to go into all the world, to preach his gospel to every creature. Though they did not at this time understand the full import of his words, they certainly implied that they were to preach salvation by Christ, to human creatures of every description as far as they were able. These things they were to enforce, by promising salvation in its full extent to all that believed and were baptized, and by declaring the final and dreadful condemnation of all unbelievers, whatever

their character in other respects might be. Tell them that if they believe the gospel, and give up themselves to be Christ's disciples ; if they renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and are devoted to Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and to God in Christ as their God in covenant ; and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity herein, they shall be saved from the guilt and power of sin ; it shall not rule them, it shall not ruin them. He that is a *true* christian, shall be saved through Christ. Simon Magus professed to believe, and was baptized, yet he was not saved : see his history in Acts 8. 13.

Doubtless we must understand this as a solemn declaration of that true faith which receives Christ in all his characters and offices, and for all the purposes of salvation, which produces its proper effect on the heart and life ; not a mere assent, which is a dead faith, and cannot profit. If men truly believe in Christ, profess faith in him, and partake of his sanctifying Spirit, they will doubtless be saved, even should they have no opportunity of being baptized with water, or should they fall into any mistake about the outward mode of administering that ordinance. The commission of Christ's ministers extends to every creature throughout the world, and the declarations of the gospel contain not only truths, encouragements, and precepts, but also most awful warnings. However men may despise or dispute such solemn denunciations, they will be fulfilled upon all who hear and reject the gospel.

(Observe what power they should be endued with, for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach. Not that all who believe, shall be able to produce these signs, but some employed in propagating the faith : signs are intended for them that believe not, 1 Cor. 14. 22. They shall do wonders in Christ's name, the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and brought in by prayer. Particular signs are mentioned. They shall cast out devils. They shall speak with tongues which they had never known. This was both a miracle upon the mind, for confirming the truth of the gospel, and a means of spreading the gospel among nations that had not heard it. They shall take up serpents. This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the viper that fastened on his hand, Acts 28. 5, 6. They

shall be kept unhurt from that generation of vipers among whom they live, or by the malice of the old serpent. If compelled by persecutors to drink any poisonous thing, it shall not hurt them: of which instances are found in ecclesiastical history. They shall lay hands on the sick, who shall recover, as multitudes had done, by their Master's healing touch. Many elders of the church had this power, see James 5. 14, where, as a sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord.

14. "To the eleven themselves as they sat at meat."—*Schulzfeld*. As Thomas was absent, only ten were present at this appearance of Christ. The principal or general number is sometimes expressed in scripture instead of the precise one.

18. *A. Clarke* notices that there is no record or tradition indicating that any of the apostles ever suffered by poison, while the *false* apostle Mohammed came to his end by that means.

§ 156. Ver. 19, 20. *Christ's ascension*.

After the Lord had spoken, he went up into heaven, see Acts 1. 9. He was received with acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he sat on the right hand of God. Sitting is a posture of rest, for now he had finished his work; and a posture of rule, for now he took possession of his kingdom. He sat at the right hand of God, which denotes his sovereign dignity and universal power. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is by his Son. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world. Christ's being believed on in the world, and received up into glory, are put together, 1 Tim. 3. 16.

The apostles went forth, and preached every where, far and near. Though the doctrine they preached, was spiritual and heavenly, and directly contrary to the spirit and temper of the world, though it met with much opposition, and was wholly destitute of all worldly supports and advantages, yet the preachers of it were neither afraid nor ashamed. In a few years the sound went forth unto the ends of the earth, Rom. 10. 18.

Christ's ministers do not now need to work miracles in confirmation of their message; the scriptures are indisputably proved to be of Divine original, and this renders those inexcusable who reject or neglect them. The effects of the gospel,

when faithfully preached and truly believed, in changing the tempers and characters of mankind, form a constant proof, a miraculous proof, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

May our ascended and glorified Redeemer send forth many faithful ministers every where to preach his gospel; and may he work with them and confirm his word by signs following; even by opening men's eyes, and by turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all that are sanctified by faith in him. Amen.

Greisbach states the parallelisms of Mark's gospel, when compared with those of Matthew and Luke, as follows; though he is not to be considered as a servile copier, since his gospel contains additional circumstances in many places where the passages are parallels. See *Hales*, who shows that Mark is not to be considered as an abridger or servile copier, but an original historian, judiciously selecting, and sometimes enlarging the most important passages adapted to his peculiar plan of giving a succinct account of our Lord's ministry.

	MARK.		MATT.		LUKE.
i.	1—20	iii	1—4, 22		
	21—39		....	iv.	31—44.
	40—112, 6		.....	v.	12—vi. 11.
iii.	7—12	xii.	15, 16		
	13—19		.....	vi.	12—16.
	20—30		22—32		
	31—35		46—50		
iv.	1—20	xiii.	1—23		
	21—25		.....	viii.	16—18.
	26—29		24—30		
	30—32		31, 32		
	33, 34		34, 35		
	35—41		.....		22—25.
v.	1—43		.....		26—56.
vi.	1—6		53—58.		
	7—13		.....	ix.	1—6.
	14—16	xiv.	1, 2		7—9.
	17—29		3—12.		
	30, 31		.....		10.
	32—44		13—21		11—17.
	45—xiii. 21		22—xvi. 12		
	22—26				
	27—ix. 50		13—xviii. 9		18—51.
x.	1—12	xix.	1—12.		
	13—xii. 38.		13—xxxiii. 1	xvii.	5—xx. 45.
xii.	38—44		.....	xx.	45—xxi. 4.
xiii.	1—32	xxiv.	1—36	xxi.	5, &c
	33—36				
xiv. 1—xvi. 8		xxvi.	1—xxviii. 8		
xvi.	9				
	10—13		.....	xxiv.	10—35.
	14		.....		36—43.
	15—18	xxviii.	18—20		
	19		.....		50. 51.
	20				

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

### ST. LUKE.

THERE is little certain information concerning this evangelist, who also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. He is generally supposed to have been a native of Antioch, by profession a physician, and a companion of the apostle Paul. Probably he was descended from Gentile parents, but embraced the Jewish religion in his youth, and was afterwards converted to christianity. The style of his writings, and his intimate acquaintance with the Jewish rites and usages, sufficiently show that he was a Jew, while his thorough knowledge of the Greek language and his name speak his Gentile origin. From Acts 21. 17—30, it appears that he was considered a Jew, not a Gentile; and, from Col. 4. 11, 14, it would appear that he was not originally one of the circumcision. He is first mentioned Acts 16. 10, 11, as with Paul at Troas, whence he attended him to Jerusalem, and was with him in his voyage and imprisonment at Rome. None of the fathers mention Luke as a martyr.

The genuineness and authenticity of St. Luke's gospel is confirmed by all the ancient writers, nor have any valid arguments ever been alleged against its inspiration. The internal evidences in favour of this gospel are incontrovertible; they are as strong as those of any other book in the New Testament. Nor are the observations of those who oppose certain parts of it worthy of attention. The time when it was written is by some thought to have been A. D. 53, but most consider A. D. 63, or 64, more correct. The place where it was written is still more difficult to ascertain, but it seems most probable that when Luke left Paul he went into Greece, and wrote his gospel there, for the Gentile converts. One peculiar design appears to have been, to give them information not necessary for the Jews, as the birth of John the Baptist, &c. Many of the parables which he exclusively records, are peculiarly encouraging to the Gentiles. He also marks his principal dates by the reigns of the Roman emperors.

From the commencement of this gospel it would appear to be designed to supersede many defective and unauthentic narratives in circulation, and to give a genuine account of the life, miracles, and doctrines of our Lord, learned from those who heard and witnessed his discourses and miracles. It contains many proofs that Luke was a man of letters. His style is copious, pure, and flowing, and strongly resembles that of his great master Paul. Many words and expressions are exactly parallel to those of the best classic authors; he has more that are peculiar to himself than the other evangelists, and they are mostly compound words. His work also appears to be a more studied composition than the writings of the other evangelists.—(33. 77.)

#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. Ver. 1—4. *The Preface.*

Several persons besides the evangelists had undertaken to publish narratives of those things which were most surely believed by christians, or most fully proved to them. But as these histories were not compiled with sufficient accuracy, St. Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deemed it incumbent on him to form a more complete work of this kind, as he was fully acquainted with the subject. This history the evangelist addressed to Theophilus for his more full instruction. Theophilus signifies "a lover of God;" he appears to have been a person of rank and authority, as the title "most excellent," is the same which is addressed elsewhere to the Roman governors. The word, instructed, signifies catechised, and relates to that instruction in the first principles of christianity, wherein converts were afterwards to be more fully taught.

Luke will not write of things about

which christians may safely differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men, have ventured their souls upon with confidence and satisfaction.

There is a certainty in the gospel of Christ which we may build upon; and those well instructed in the things of God, should give diligence to know the certainty of those things; to know not only what they believe, but why they believe it, that they may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

Let us remember that those things which we are required most surely to believe, are most abundantly proved to be of Divine origin. The great transactions whereon our hopes depend, have been recorded by those who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, and who were perfected in their understanding of them through Divine inspiration. Let us, therefore, endeavour

to get a more exact knowledge of these things, and labour to bring all we know to a more established faith in them. This is the way to approve ourselves "Lovers to God," and to promote his glory.

1. The preface of Luke may be considered as demonstrating the very great care with which the first disciples of Christ inquired into every circumstance of the life of their Divine Master, before they delivered them to the world as authenticated.—*Townsend.*

3. *Lightfoot* has pointed out a passage from *Josephus*, Ant. 1. 20. ch. 8. showing that there was a man of high rank among the Jews, named *Theophilus*, contemporary with Luke.

4. *Hales* renders these verses thus: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to compose a narrative of the things that are fully believed among us, [Christians]; according as they delivered them to us, who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the oracle, [the Word]: it seemed good to me also, having been accurately informed in all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent *Theophilus*, that thou mightest well know the certainty of those matters, in which thou hast been instructed by word of mouth."

### § 3. Ver. 5-25. *Zacharias and Elisabeth.*

This evangelist, designing to give a particular account of our Saviour's birth, begins with John Baptist, who was his forerunner. The father of John Baptist was a priest, a son of Aaron; his name *Zacharias*, of the course of *Abia*. David divided the priests into twenty-four courses, for the more regular performance of their office, 1 Chron. 24. *Elisabeth*, his wife, was also righteous before God; they were so in his sight, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. It is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should, with their wives, be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock. Their being righteous before God was evidenced, not by their talk, but by their works. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to Divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord; which have reference to all the instances of good conversation. They lived as ministers and their families are in a special manner concerned to do. They were sinners as all are, and were justified and saved in the same way; but still they were eminent for piety and integrity, and joined together in every part of the service of God.

They had no children, and it could not be expected that *Elisabeth* should have any in her old age. But although this was deemed a very heavy calamity by the

Jews, *Zacharias* did not give any countenance to the practices of divorce or of taking another wife, though both were common among the Jews at that time.

*Zacharias* executed the priest's office; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though we have not the desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and in diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope mercy and comfort will come at last.

While *Zacharias* was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without. These all addressed themselves to their devotions, in mental prayer, when the priest was gone in to burn incense. The true Israel of God always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of service by which we honour God, and keep up our communion with him. It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go with the minister in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well in the most lively prayer, if we are not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us? All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts, are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession, if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who ever lives, making intercession.

When thus employed, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord. It was a surprise upon *Zacharias*, even to terror. Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one, whose visage, and surrounding lustre, spoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations, and his conscience is afraid that evil tidings will be brought by them. *Daniel* himself could not bear it, Dan. 10. 8.

May we not, then, regard it as an instance of the goodness as well as the wisdom of God, that the services which heavenly spirits render us should be generally invisible? It is delightful to observe the condescension of *Gabriel*. Let

it teach us to pursue the humblest offices of duty and love which God may assign unto us.—(80.)

The prayers Zacharias has often made, shall now receive an answer of peace. Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten. Prayers made when we were young and entering into the world, may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. The prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him; and this shall be the sign that thou art accepted of God—Elisabeth shall bear thee a son. Those mercies are doubly sweet that are given in answer to prayer.

He shall have a son in his old age. Mercies long waited for, when they come at last, are the more acceptable. Many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of rejoicing at their birth, would wish they had never been; but thou need not rejoice with trembling at his birth, as the best must do, but mayest rejoice with triumph at it. And many shall rejoice at his birth, as a presage of the blessed days the gospel will introduce.

He shall be great in the sight of the Lord; those are great indeed that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eyes of a vain and carnal world. God will set him before his face continually, will employ him in his work, and that shall make him truly honourable. He shall be, as Samson was by the Divine precept, Judg. 13. 7, and Samuel by his mother's vow, 1 Sam. 1. 11, a nazirite for life. Those that would be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must live a life of self-denial. It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their birth; John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Spirit.

He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and preparing them to receive the gospel of Christ. He shall be brought forth as a zealous preacher, and as a successful reformer, to be instrumental in converting many descendants of Israel to the true worship and service of the Lord their God. He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, with courage, zeal, holiness, and a mind mortified to all earthly interests and pleasures.

Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the

fathers to the children, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices the Jews have against the Gentiles. Lightfoot observes, It is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children to the Jewish church, Isa. 54. 13; 60. 4, 9; 62. 5; 66. 12.

Or, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children; inducing persons of every age and station in society, to lay aside disputes, and unite in repenting of sin, and attending to true godliness. Thus the disobedient and rebellious would be brought back to the wisdom of their righteous forefathers, or rather, induced to attend to the wisdom of that Just One who was coming among them, that they might be a people prepared by repentance to welcome the salvation, and become the subjects of the Lord, even of Jesus Christ. The mighty and affluent of the earth are indeed mean and obscure, compared with a poor prophet who is filled with wisdom and zeal, who wants not the honours and pleasures of the world, whose work and joy it is to bring sinners to repentance, to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to call men to believe in Christ, and to prepare for his coming to judge the world. Some measure of this greatness we may desire for our children, and with that view we should early devote them to God.

Zacharias heard all that the angel said; but his unbelief spake. He said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? This was not a humble petition for confirming his faith, but an objection against what seemed to him altogether incredible. His unbelief was silenced. The angel said, I am Gabriel; which signifies the power of God, or, the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bid him say this was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name, to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming, sent to Daniel.

If thou wilt have a sign for the support of thy faith, it shall be such a one as shall be also the punishment of thine unbelief. Thou shalt be both dumb and deaf; the same word signifies both; and it is plain that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends made signs to him, as well as he to them. In striking him dumb, God dealt *justly* with him, because he had objected against God's word. Hence we may take occasion to



admire the patience of God towards us. God dealt *kindly* with him, for thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful, unbelieving words. It is better not to speak at all than to speak wickedly. Thus also God confirmed his faith. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin, we are brought to give the more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain. And the unbelief of man shall not make the promises of God of no effect; they shall be fulfilled in their season. He shall not be for ever dumb, but only till the day that these things shall be performed, then his lips shall be opened, that his mouth may show forth God's praise.

Even real believers are apt to dishonour God by unbelief; thus the glad tidings and precious promises of his word become the occasion of their sin and correction. The very messengers of his mercy are constrained to give intimations of his displeasure; the fulfilling of his promises is attended by rebukes; their mouths are stopped in silence and confusion, when otherwise they would have been praising God with joy and gratitude.

The people stayed, expecting Zacharias to come out of the temple, because he was to pronounce the blessing upon them in the name of the Lord; though he stayed beyond the usual time, they did not hurry away without it. He gave them to understand, by some signs he made, that he had seen a vision. And we learn that he stayed out the days of his administration, though he was dumb and deaf. Even under Divine chastisement it is good for us to go on with our work as far as we are able; thus our afflictions may be sanctified to us, and abated. He then returned home, and his wife, being sensible of the fulfilment of the promise, hid herself five months. She kept at home, that she might be preserved from any ceremonial defilement, as the child was to be a perpetual nazirite, or that she might have the more leisure for meditation, prayer, and thanksgiving. She gives this reason for her retirement, For thus hath the Lord dealt with me; not only thus graciously in giving me a child, but thus honourably in giving me such a child as is to be a nazirite. In God's gracious dealings with us we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has looked on us with compassion and favour, and therefore has thus dealt with us.

5. Only four of the original classes of priests returned from the Babylonish captivity; but they were subdivided, so as to make up the full number, and were distinguished by the original names. One class attended every week; and as the number of the priests was large, they determined by lot who should perform the different offices.

10. The burning incense was the most solemn of the daily services. The number of persons present, and consequently witnesses to this visitation upon Zacharias, would be considerable. The whole course of priests of that week, the Levites under those priests, the men of the station who presented the whole congregation by putting their hands on the heads of the sacrifices, and many people whom devotion would have caused to attend, as well as others who had regular duties to perform. If it was on a sabbath, as *Lightfoot* supposes, the number would be still larger than on other days. Zacharias' miraculous silence when expected to pronounce the blessing, and his imparting by signs that he had seen a vision, must have made an impression on many, and would be still remembered at the period when this gospel was written.

13. John, signifies the grace and mercy of God.

19. To stand in the presence of a sovereign is an oriental expression, denoting a most eminent station.

§ 4. Ver. 26—38. *Annunciation of Christ's birth.*

We have here an account of the mother of our Lord, of whom he was to be born, whom though we are not to pray to, yet we ought to praise God for. Her name was Mary, the same with Miriam; the name signifies exalted, and great elevation it was to be thus favoured above all the daughters of the house of David.

Also Christ must be born miraculously. The angel's address signified, Rejoice on account of the honour intended thee, for thou art highly favoured of the Lord, not only as an accepted believer, but as the mother of the long-expected Messiah. The Lord is therefore with thee in a special manner, and thou art happy above, and distinguished among other women. The papists have turned this salutation into an act of adoration; and translating the word "highly favoured," into "full of grace," they have addressed the virgin Mary with idolatrous worship, repeating it oftener than any prayer to God!

But it means only, Hail, thou that art the especially elected and favoured of the most high; to attain that honour Jewish mothers have so long desired.—(62.)

This extraordinary salutation and appearance troubled Mary. She was perplexed about its meaning; the angel then calmed her fears, assured her that she had found favour with God, and would become the mother of a son whose name she should call Jesus. He would be great

above all that ever appeared upon earth, being the Son of the Highest, one in nature and perfection with the Lord God, who in his character of Mediator would exalt him to the throne of David, whose descendant he would be as to his human nature. He would reign over the true Israel of God, not for a few years only, as David and his successors, but for ever; of his kingdom there would be no end.

Jesus! the name that refreshes the fainting spirits of humbled sinners, the ointment poured forth that draws believers to love him, Sol. Song 1. 3; sweet to speak and sweet to hear, and life in the heart. Jesus, a saviour! but we know not his riches and our own poverty, therefore we run not to him; we perceive not that we are lost and perishing, therefore a saviour is a word of little relish. Were we convinced of the huge mass of guilt that lies upon us, and the wrath that hangs over us for it, ready to fall upon us, it would be our continual thought, Is the Saviour mine? And that we might find him so, we should trample on all that lies in our way to him.—(88.)

Mary's reply to the angel was entirely the language of faith and humble admiration, and she asked no sign for the confirming her faith, as Zacharias had done. Does she ask how this shall be? A Divine power will undertake it, not the power of an angel employed in it, as in other works of wonder, but the power of God the Holy Ghost himself.

The formation of the child Jesus was a mystery; without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16. It is a new thing created in the earth, Jer. 31. 22. concerning which we must not covet to be wise above what is written. The child she shall conceive is a holy thing, he must not share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature; and he shall be called the Son of God, as the Son of the Father by eternal generation, as an indication of which, he shall now be formed by the Holy Ghost. His human nature must be produced so, as it was fit that should be, which was to be taken into union with the Divine nature.

It was further encouragement to her faith, to be told respecting her cousin Elisabeth. The angel concludes with that great truth, of undoubted certainty and universal use, With God nothing shall be impossible; and if nothing, then

not this. Abraham staggered not at the belief of the Divine promise, because he was strong in his belief of the Divine power, Rom. 4. 20, 21. No word of God must be incredible to us, as long as no work of God is impossible to him. She owns herself a believing subject to the Divine authority. Also, she is a believing expectant of the Divine favour. We must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the word of God, and ground our hopes upon it. Be it unto me according to thy word; just so, and no otherwise.

While we consider the peculiar honour conferred on the mother of our Lord, we should remember that those in whose hearts Christ dwelleth by faith, are indeed highly favoured. Happy must they be to whom the Lord is graciously reconciled, and with whom he is present by his sanctifying Spirit. Let us then seek to be the subjects of his kingdom, and if we meet with sufferings by the way, let us remember how Jesus was abased before he entered into his glory. Let us earnestly seek, that the Holy Ghost, by whose operation the human nature of Jesus was formed, may renew his image on our souls, that we may be evidenced to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. In all conflicts let us remember that with God nothing is impossible, and as we read and hear his promises let us turn them into prayers, Behold the willing servant of the Lord; let it be unto me according to thy word.

33. Upon this mysterious and important subject we may observe, that there is evidence in the Jewish writers, sufficient to show that the general expectation of that nation was, that the Divine Person appointed to deliver man, should be the seed of the woman, in some manner differing from mere men, formed not in the ordinary course of nature, but by the immediate exercise of Omnipotence.—See *Townsend*. Also *Pearson on the Creed*, and *Smith on the Messiah*.

36. Though Elisabeth was wife to a priest, it does not follow that she was of the tribe of Levi, as women might marry into other tribes, if not heiresses.—See *Whitby*.

§ 5. V. 39—56. *Interview of Mary and Elisabeth.*

Mary, as one in haste to communicate the declaration of the angel to Elisabeth, took a long journey, probably to Hebron. It is very beneficial and comfortable for those who have a good work of grace begun in their souls, to communicate one to another. On Mary's arrival, Elisabeth was conscious of her approach, who was to be the mother of the great Redeemer. At the same time she was filled with the

Holy Ghost, and under his prophetic influence pronounced Mary and her expected child to be most blessed and happy, as peculiarly honoured of and dear to the Most High God. Add though Elisabeth was the superior in age and station, she considered Mary so distinguished, being chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, which was revealed to her by the Spirit of prophecy, she was filled with admiration at being favoured with a visit from her. Mary was peculiarly happy in that she had so readily and implicitly believed the Divine message. By this she honoured God, and received her mercies unmixed with rebukes. This had a tacit reference to the unbelief of Zacharias, and the subject was very properly touched on by Elisabeth. Her words, and all the circumstances of the interview, must have had a powerful effect in establishing the faith of Mary, while the favour and testimony of such respected persons as Zacharias and Elisabeth, would powerfully tend to prevent any reflections on her character.

Mary, being animated by Elisabeth's address, and being under the influence of the Holy Ghost, broke out in a transport of joy, admiration, and gratitude; her spirit within her exulted and rejoiced in God her Saviour. By her expressions it is evident that she knew herself to be a sinner, who needed a Saviour, and who could no otherwise rejoice in God than as she was interested in his salvation through the promised Messiah. She added, that the Lord had graciously condescended to regard one of so low condition in the world, and that all generations, to the end of time, would deem her happy, for the Almighty who dispenses his favours as he sees to be good, had done such things for her as never before had been experienced. Those who see their need of Christ, and are importunately desirous of righteousness and life in him, he fills with good things, with the best things; and they are abundantly satisfied with the blessings he gives. Those who are weary and heavy-laden shall find rest with Christ, and those who thirst are called to come to him, and drink; for they only know how to value his gifts: to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. Those who are not hungry, who are full of themselves and their own righteousness, and think they have sufficiency in themselves, he sends away, they come full of self, and are sent away empty of Christ.

He sends them to the gods whom they served, to their own righteousness and strength in which they trusted. Nor could she doubt the fulfilling of the promises, as his mercy ever had been shown in former ages. Especially those to Abraham and his posterity, and that Seed in particular, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

From this intercourse between Elisabeth and Mary, let us observe, that those who are experienced in Divine things will delight in speaking together of what the Lord has done for their souls. The influences of the Holy Spirit will do much to counteract that emulation to which we naturally are prone. His holy consolations raise us above the feelings of outward disparities of rank, while they preserve those outward distinctions which are made by Divine Providence. Humble believers will appropriate no glory to themselves; whatever may be their distinction, they must have been for ever miserable without the salvation of their God and Saviour. Their thankfulness will ever be united to a humble sense of their own sinfulness, and of his mercy who hath looked down with pity on their low estate, and raised them to everlasting happiness. He will satisfy the desires of the poor in spirit who long for spiritual blessings, while the self-sufficient shall be sent empty away.

48. These words of Mary show that her mind was deeply impressed with the language, sentiments, and doctrines of the Old Testament, from whence most of the expressions are taken, particularly see the song of Miriam and that of Hannah. The word here rendered blessed, means happy, as in James 5. 11, and does not afford the smallest ground for paying homage to Mary.

§ 6. Ver. 57—66. *The birth of John the baptist.*

In these verses we have an account of the birth of John Baptist, and the great joy among all the relations of the family, upon this extraordinary occasion. They acknowledge that the Lord had magnified his mercy to her, so the word is. Some proposed that he should be called by his father's name, Zacharias. The mother opposed it, and would have him called John; having learned, as is most probable, by information in writing from her husband, that God appointed this to be his name. He shall be called Johanan—Gracious, because he shall introduce the gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines most bright. The relations objected. They appealed to the father. They

made signs to him, by which it appears that Zacharias was deaf as well as dumb; whereupon he made signs to them to give him a tablet, such as they then used to write upon; and he wrote these words, His name is John. It is so; the matter is determined already; the angel had given him that name. When Zacharias could not speak, he wrote. When ministers have their mouths stopped, that they cannot preach, yet they may do good as long as they can write. Many of the martyrs when in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use; blessed Paul himself did so. Zacharias then recovered his speech. The time fixed for his being silent was, till the day that these things should be fulfilled, those relating to his birth and name: that time was now expired. Unbelief closed his mouth, and believing opened it again; he believes, therefore he speaks. When God opens our lips, our mouths must show forth his praise; better be without speech than not use it in praising God.

Fear came on all them that dwelt round about there. If we have not a good hope, as we ought to have, built upon the gospel, the tidings of it will fill us with fear. They believed and trembled, whereas they should have believed and triumphed. It raised the expectations of people concerning this child. What we hear that may be of use to us, we should treasure up. We have reason to think that there were some of those living at the time when John began his public ministry, who remembered these things.

It is said, The hand of the Lord was with him. God has ways of operating on children in their infancy, which we cannot account for. We should observe the dealings of God, and wait the event of his dispensations; and when our children grow up healthy, and improve in their faculties, we should ascribe it to the Lord, and entreat him to give them his heavenly grace and wisdom.

§ 6. Ver. 67-80 *The song of Zacharias.*

When Zacharias recovered the gift of speech, he was also filled with the Holy Ghost, and uttered a prophecy concerning the kingdom and salvation of the Messiah. He began with praising the Lord God of Israel, that after having so long left them without the teaching of inspired prophets, he was accomplishing the work of redemption, so long foretold, in the birth of the forerunner of the Messiah,

and in his approach to redeem them to God with his blood, and to rescue them from the power of their enemies. The horn was an emblem of dignity and protection, see Ps. 75. 5, also of annoyance to enemies; all this Christ is to his people. In Him would be fulfilled the words of all the prophets. So that the coming of this Saviour would perform or complete the mercy God had bestowed on their forefathers for ages past, and accomplish the gracious covenant entered into with believers, under different dispensations, from the first promise made to Adam after the fall. This engaged deliverance from the power of Satan, sin, the world, death, and every enemy; as well as redemption from the curse of the holy law, and the righteous vengeance of God; that, without fear of being destroyed by their foes, or of being cast off by him, they might serve him in righteousness and holiness during the remainder of their lives.

In token of the immediate approach of the Messiah, John was born to be his forerunner; and to him, though an infant, Zacharias spake, declaring that he had allotted to him the honour of being that prophet of the Most High God who was to go before the face of the Lord. He was to give the assurance of complete salvation to the Lord's people, by the full remission of all the sins of every believer in Christ, and by this to call men to repent and accept of the inestimable blessing. All these benefits were come through the tender mercy of God, who, pitying the misery of perishing sinners, caused this Day-spring from heaven to visit them, preceding the appearance of the Sun of righteousness and the gospel dispensation. Thus light would be afforded to sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, whose ignorance, guilt, and misery resembled the darkness of a prison, whose dreary situation was like the dark shade of death and hell. Then their minds would be enlightened, they would see their danger and their refuge. They would be directed into the way of peace with God, their consciences, and each other; they would walk in the holy and happy paths which are an earnest of everlasting peace and happiness. This was a very remarkable prophecy, describing the nature and effects of gospel salvation, and foretelling the success of christianity both among the Jews and Gentiles.

The gospel brings light with it, leaves

us not to wander in the darkness of pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the old testament types or figures, but in it the day dawns. In John Baptist it began to break, and increased apace to the perfect day. 1. The gospel is *discovering*; it shows that about which we were utterly in the dark; it is to give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2. It is *reviving*; it brings light to them that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of pardon; it proclaims the opening of the prison, Isa. 61. 1, brings the light of life. 3. It is *directing*; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet, Ps. 119. 105; it guides us into that way of peace, which, as sinners we have wandered from, and have not known, Rom. 3. 17, nor could ever have known of ourselves.

As John grew in stature, he gave indications of strong faith, vigorous, holy affections, resolution in the cause of God, and of being above the fear and love of the world. Thus he ripened for usefulness; but whatever was the cause, he does not appear to have been educated for the priest's office, but to have lived a retired life, till he openly came forth as the forerunner of the Messiah.

What multiplied praises in heaven and earth did the Saviour's advent occasion! Shall not we also unite in blessing the Lord God of Israel, who hath thus visited and redeemed his people? We are as deeply concerned in the redemption which Christ made for sinners with his blood as Israel of old. The whole scripture gives assurance of salvation to all God's believing people, by the remission of their sins; but let us remember, that this salvation implies a deliverance from our enemies, that being set at liberty from bondage as well as from condemnation, we may serve God without fear, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. Is this the salvation we desire? Do we experience its power on our hearts and consciences? Do we use the light of the gospel to guide us in the ways of peace and purity? If this be our case, we may be thankful and joyful. Let us then take encouragement from the knowledge of salvation, to repent of, and mortify every

sin. Let us show our gospel liberty by being the diligent servants of God. Let us follow peace with all men, as well as seek peace with God and our own consciences. And if it be the will of God that we live in obscurity, let us more diligently seek to grow strong in the grace of Jesus Christ, till the Lord open the way to services for his people's benefit.

The whole passage represents the Messiah as coming like the rising sun, to dispel the darkness which covered the world, bringing life and immortality to light through his gospel.—(75.)

68. *Venn* well remarks, that "The doctrine taught by Zacharias proves their error who conclude that men are born innocent and good, as Adam was created. The prophets, apostles, and Christ himself unanimously assert the ruin of us all as sinners by birth. Upon this melancholy truth they found the absolute necessity of redemption. What absurdity could be greater than to affirm that men, naturally upright, in peace with God, fully possessed of power so to continue, or to recover themselves if they did sin, were visited in such a state, and redeemed from it! How beneficial and consolatory is the doctrine which Zacharias teaches, with all the inspired writers! It is, the redemption of sinners by the Lord God from a state equally infamous and miserable—which challenges the most devout and thankful acceptance, as the chief of all the mercies of God; that every believer in Jesus, while he obeys his precepts, and adores him as an infallible Prophet, might triumph also in the greatness of his salvation, as a complete Redeemer."

69. "Horn" is a term frequently used to express strength, and is a symbol of power and authority.

## CHAPTER II.

Ver. 21.

M. 1. 25.

§ 8. Ver. 1-7. *The birth of Christ.*

The fulness of time was now come, when God would send forth his Son made of a woman, and made under the law. Here we have an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

The Lord Jesus was born at the time when the Roman, or fourth monarchy, was in its height. This was when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy, Dan. 2. 44. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire. Just at this juncture the Messiah was to be born according to dying Jacob's prophecy—That Shiloh should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the Lawgiver from between his feet, Gen. 49. 10. There was universal peace in the empire. Now it was fit for the Prince of peace to be born.

Our Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so it was foretold, Mic. 5. 2; the scribes so understood it, Matt. 2. 5, 6; so

did the common people, John 7. 42. Providence so ordered it, that the Jews were to be registered and enrolled, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used. Hereby the virgin Mary was brought to Bethlehem to be delivered there, according to the prediction. See how man purposes but God disposes, and uses the projects men have for serving their own purposes, for fulfilling the scripture. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brought his mother to Bethlehem, but because she was of the stock and lineage of David? Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the most early advocates for the christian religion, appeal to these rolls or records of the Roman empire, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

The circumstances of his birth were very mean. That Son of David who was the glory of his father's house had no inheritance, no not in the city of David, nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress! Christ was born in an inn, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for a while, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. He was born in a stable, a place for cattle to stand in; and for want of necessities, he was laid in the manger, instead of a cradle. We are become by sin like an outcast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses, the great prophet and lawgiver of the old testament. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since his own received him not, let us not think it strange if the world receive us not.

He well knew how unwilling we are to be meanly lodged, clothed, or fed; how we desire to have our children decorated and indulged; how apt the poor are to envy the rich, and how prone the rich to disdain the poor. He knew what deference would be paid, even by his ministers and disciples, to the wealthy and the noble, and what improper distinction would often be made between them in religious matters. Too much of these evils appear now; but when we by faith view the incarnate Son of God lying in a manger, we cannot but feel a check to vanity, ambition, and envy. We cannot, with this object before us, "seek great things" for ourselves or our children,

1, 2. Several censuses or enumerations of people and property in the Roman empire were made by order of Augustus. *Greswell* considers the enrolment here mentioned was of persons only, which would require their presence where the genealogical records of their families were kept. He understands the words of St. Luke to be more accurately rendered, "This enrolment took place before Cyrenius was governor of Syria," and to be an admonition not to confound this enrolment with the later and more memorable one in the days of Cyrenius or Quirinius, alluded to Acts 5. 37, which took place about ten years afterwards. *Hales* considers the passage would be more correctly rendered, "It came to pass in those days, (that is, a few days before our Saviour's birth,) there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus that all the land (Judea, &c. under Herod's dominion) should be enrolled, (preparatory to a census or taxing.) The taxing it-self was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, (eleven years after.) And all went to be enrolled, &c."

7. *Wetstein* considers that, the word rendered "manger" rather implies the stable generally.

§ 10. Ver. 8—20. *The birth of Christ announced to the shepherds.*

Though the birth of our Lord was attended with circumstances of poverty and meanness, it was also marked with dignity far surpassing the pomp of kings. Angels were heralds of the new-born Saviour, but they were not sent to the rulers, the priests, scribes, or pharisees; on the contrary, some poor, humble, pious, industrious shepherds were favoured with the first tidings of Immanuel's birth. They were abiding in the fields, watching, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard. They were in the business of their calling, keeping watch over their flock. We are not out of the way of Divine visits, when we are employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

While thus employed, a holy angel suddenly appeared, and a Divine glory surrounded them. This made them sore afraid, but the angel told them he was come to bring them good tidings, which would be the source of great and lasting joy, to them and to all people. For to them as men, as sinners, and as believers, a Saviour was that day born at Bethlehem, who was indeed the promised and expected Messiah, Israel's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, nay the Lord of glory, God manifest in the flesh. They might know him by his being laid in a manger, as no other babe would there be found in so mean a situation.

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God; and certainly their song was not like that mentioned, Rev. 14. 3, which no man could

learn, for it was designed that we should all learn it. Let God have the honour of this work; Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds to his praise. Glory to God, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it, so that one Divine attribute should not be glorified at the expense of another. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest. Let men have the joy of it; On earth peace, good-will toward men. God's good-will in sending the Messiah, introduced peace in this lower world. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from thence; peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile. Peace is here put for all good, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. Nor must any peace, any good, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a mediator. Here was the peace proclaimed; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. See how well pleased angels were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptance—That the good-will of God toward men, is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth.

When the angels had finished their adorations of God and congratulations of mankind, they disappeared. The shepherds determined to go immediately to Bethlehem, to behold the things the Lord thus graciously made known to them.

When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we improve the advantages we have for confirming our faith, and keeping up communion with God in this lower world. These shepherds speak with assurance; what room was left to doubt, when the Lord thus made it known to them? They lost no time, but came with haste to the place. The poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord, were no shock to their faith.

The circumstances agreeing with the sign the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied, and made known abroad, concerning this child, that he was

the Saviour, even Christ the Lord. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. They wondered, but appear not to have inquired further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace hid from their eyes. The shepherds returned to their humble employment, with joyful hearts, glorifying and blessing God for his distinguished favours to them. Mary carefully observed and meditated on all these things, which were so suited to enlarge her expectations, and enliven her holy affections. We ourselves should be more effectually delivered from errors in judgment and practice, did we more fully ponder these things in our hearts.

It is still proclaimed in our ears that *to us* is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord. These should be glad tidings to all, for in them all our hopes centre, and from them all our comforts flow. What an auspicious morn was that which brought so great a blessing to mankind! What a joyful day is that which first conveys the sound of the gospel to our ears! But most happy for us is that hour in which we are enabled to believe in Christ for the salvation of our souls. If real christians deem it proper to commemorate the birth of Christ at a season set apart for that purpose, they will not do it with revellings and feastings, but with abundant thanksgivings to God, and liberality to their poorer brethren. They will employ their prayers, examples, and endeavours to give glory to God, by spreading the gospel, seeking the peace of the church, and copying his good will towards men.

8. See note on the dates of Christ's life.

9. The glory of the Shechinah, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, was now beheld for the first time during many centuries, and the heavenly multitude were the attendants of our Lord, when he left the glory of his Father to enter on the scene of his humiliation and suffering, for which his mortal body was now prepared.—*Townsend.*

§ 11, 12. Ver. 21—24. *Christ presented in the temple.*

Our Lord Jesus was not only the Son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but, as the Son of a daughter of Abraham, he was made under the law of Moses. Though its institutions were beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them,

Christ submitted to them, that he might the better set them aside for us.

He was not conceived or born in sin, and did not need that mortification of a corrupt nature, or that renewal unto holiness which were signified by circumcision. This ordinance was in his case a pledge given of his future perfect obedience to the whole law, in the midst of sufferings and temptations, even unto death for us. It was an entrance on that work which he finished on the cross.

At the end of forty days, Mary went up to the temple to offer the appointed sacrifices for her purification. Joseph also presented the holy child Jesus, because, as a first-born son, he was to be presented to the Lord, and redeemed according to the law. The sacrifice, being the least expensive that was appointed, was a proof of Joseph's poverty, see Lev. 12. 6—8. This poverty is mentioned in Mary's song of praise, ch. 1. 48.

While we trust in the perfect righteousness of our Divine Surety, we ought to copy his example, seeking the true circumcision of the heart, true purification from the pollution of sin, and the dedication of body and soul to God, shadowed forth in these types and institutions. Let us also present our children to the Lord who gave them to us, beseeching him to redeem them from sin and death, make them holy to himself, and number them with the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

§ 12. Ver. 25—35. *Simeon prophesies concerning Jesus.*

Simeon dwelt in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his piety and communion with God. He was just toward men, and devout toward God; these two must always go together. He also waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel would find consolation. Christ is not only the Author of his people's comfort, but the Matter and Ground of it, the Consolation of Israel. He was long in coming, and those who believed he would come, continued waiting, desiring his coming, and hoping for it. The Holy Ghost was upon Simeon, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the old testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he re-

ceived this oracle, that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. Those, and those only, can look death in the face without terror, who have had a sight of Christ by faith.

When Christ was presented, Simeon came, by direction of the Spirit, into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the support of his hope, now provided for his joy. Those who would see Christ must go to his temple. Simeon took him up in his arms, some think, to do either the parent's part, or the priest's part. When we receive the gospel record of Christ, with lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then we take Christ in our arms. Simeon was promised that he should have a sight of Christ, but more is performed—he has him in his arms! Hereupon, he blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.

Simeon has a pleasant prospect concerning himself, and rises above the love of life, and fear of death. None that hoped in God's word ever were ashamed of their hope. He blessed God that he saw that salvation in his arms, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. Here is a confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the Saviour, the salvation itself, the salvation of God's appointing. It is a farewell to this world. Now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them see no more in this world. The eye is not satisfied till it hath seen Christ, and then it is. How poor does this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms, and salvation in his view! It is a welcome to death; Now let thy servant depart. Death is the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God gives us our discharge, for we are his servants, and must not quit his service till we have fulfilled our time.

See here, how comfortable is the death of a good man; he departs as God's servant from the place of his toil to that of his rest. He departs in peace, peace with God, peace with his own conscience, in peace with death. What is the ground of this comfort? For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. This speaks a believing expectation of a happy state after death, through this salvation he now had sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it gain, Phil. 1.



21. Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death.

Simeon has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. It is prepared before the face of all people, to be made known. See Isa. 49. 6, I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, and a blessing to the church. It was an honour to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, lived, and died, among them. And those who were Israelites indeed, of the spiritual Israel, they shall glory in him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and glory, Isa. 45. 25.

Joseph and Mary marvelled at those things which were spoken concerning this Child. And because they had their faith strengthened thereby, Simeon shows them they had to rejoice: he pronounced those blessed, who had the honour to be related to this Child. They had reason to rejoice, for this Child is set for the rising again of many in Israel, for the conversion of many to God, that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God, that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. He is set to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Him. Simeon shows them likewise, what reason they had to rejoice with trembling, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, Ps. 2. 11.

It is true, Christ shall be a blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel who will be prejudiced against him. As it is pleasant to think how many there are to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set for a Sign, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. His outward meanness, his holy character, his humbling doctrine and spiritual salvation, proved equally offensive to the pharisees and sadducees, and interfered with the carnal notions of the people in general. Jesus and his doctrine and people are still spoken against, his truth and holiness are still contradicted and blasphemed; his preached word is still the touchstone of men's characters.

The secret good affections in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing Christ; the secret corruptions of others will be revealed by their enmity to

Christ. Men will be judged by the thoughts of their hearts concerning Christ. It is true, Christ shall be a comfort to his mother; but a sword shall pierce through her own soul also. He shall be a suffering Jesus; she shall suffer with him, because of the nearness of her relation and affection. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think it cut her to the heart.

§ 12, 13. Ver. 36—40. *Anna prophesies concerning Jesus.*

Christ is noticed by Anna, a prophetess. Perhaps it is meant that she had understanding in the holy scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the younger women in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witness. Some think she had been eighty-four years a widow; others suppose she was eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was left a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again. She was a constant resident in, or at least an attendant on the temple. Some think she lodged in the courts of the temple; others think her not departing from the temple, means no more than that she was constantly there at the time of Divine service. Besides constant attendance on the public worship, she abounded in private devotions; she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, was always in a praying frame, gave herself to prayer; was frequent in ejaculations, in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in all she served God—that put an excellency into them. It is pleasant to see aged christians not weary of well-doing; but taking more and more pleasure in it, and seeing more and more need of it, till they come to heaven. Those that are diligent and faithful in improving their light and means, shall have further discoveries.

Anna is abundantly recompensed for attendance so many years in the temple. She came in when the Child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him. She gave thanks likewise to the Lord. Those to whom Christ is made known, have great reason to thank the Lord; and we should be excited to this duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others. She confessed unto the Lord, so it may be read; she made an open profession of her faith concerning this Child.

She instructed others concerning him. She spake of him to all who believed the Messiah would come, and who, with Him, looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was wanted, waited for, and wished for. When the relative and social duties of life have been duly attended to, it is very proper to spend the declining years in retirement and devotion; with deep humility and readiness to welcome Christ and his salvation, and to speak of him to all that wait for his redemption, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Let the example of the venerated saints, Simon and Anna, impress and animate those whose hoary heads are, like theirs, a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. The lips soon to be silent in the grave, should be showing forth the praises of the Redeemer.—(80.)

Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus. Luke relates no more till they were returned into Galilee. In all things it behoved Christ to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore he passed through infancy and childhood as other children, yet without sin; nay, with manifest indications of the Divine nature in him. As other children, he grew in stature of body, and the improvement of understanding in his human soul, that his natural body might be a figure of his mystical body, which though animated by a perfect spirit, yet maketh increase of itself till it comes to the perfect man, Eph. 4. 13, 16. But whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was strong in spirit. By the Spirit of God all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating. Whereas other children have foolishness bound in their hearts, which appears in what they say or do, he was filled with wisdom, not by instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did, was wisely said and wisely done, above his years. Other children show that the corruption of nature is in them, he made it appear that nothing but the grace of God was upon him. As man, his wisdom and knowledge could not be infinite or incapable of increase, but of the manner in which the indwelling Deity gradually communicated knowledge, wisdom, and holiness to the human nature of Christ we know nothing.

38. The discontinuance of miracles and prophecy, fixed the attention of the Jews to the study of the scriptures, as the only means left them of becoming acquainted with the Divine will. It likewise tended more forcibly to excite the attention of the people to Him, who in the appointed time united in his own person the gifts and powers of miracle and of prophecy. When Christ came into the world his appearance was generally expected. The great anticipated a temporal king, a mighty hero, a conqueror of the Roman power. The poorer and more reflecting, looked for him as the consolation of Israel, and only few understood the real nature of that spiritual dominion over the heart and conscience which he came to establish.

—Townsend.  
§ 14. Ver. 41—52. *Christ with the learned men in the temple.*

We have here the only record concerning our blessed Saviour from his infancy, until his showing to Israel when about twenty-nine years old.

Christ went up with his parents to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor. Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns.

The child Jesus, at about twelve years old, went up with them. It is for the honour of Christ that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas. His parents did not return till they had stayed all the seven days of the feast. It is good to stay to the conclusion of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, It is good to be here; and not to hasten away. The child tarried behind in Jerusalem, he had a Father in heaven, of whom he was observant.

On these occasions the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey; and they concluded that he was along with some of their neighbours. When they found him not, they turned back again, seeking him. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how they lost them, and must turn back again to the place where they last had them; must remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, and return to their first love, Rev. 2. 4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ, must go to Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, the place in which he has chosen to put his name; there they may hope to meet him.

The third day, they found him in some apartment of the temple, where the doctors of the law kept their conferences, or their schools for disputation, he was sitting there, hearkening to their instructions, proposing questions, and answering inquiries, with such wisdom and propriety, that those who heard were delighted with him. Young persons should do thus in their early days. They should seek the knowledge of Divine truth, attend the ministry of the gospel, and propose such inquiries to their elders and teachers as may tend to increase their knowledge. From the earliest youth every one should deem God's service his great business.

Christ gave them to taste (saith Calvin) of his Divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks they might have had Christ to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

His mother told him, Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee. Those may well complain of their losses, who think they have lost Christ; but his parents did not sorrow, and sit down in despair, but sorrowed, and sought. If we would find Christ, we must seek him, sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. Those who thus seek him in sorrow, shall find him, at length, with the greater joy. He gently reproved their solicitude about him; How is it that ye sought me? I would have followed you home when I had done the business I have to do here. Know ye not that I ought to be in my Father's house: so some read it; under my Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him. Or, at my Father's work; I must be about my Father's business, and therefore could not go home so soon as you might. Have you not already perceived that I have devoted myself to the service of religion? Herein he has left us an example; for it becomes the children of God; in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and make all other concerns give way to it. They did not understand what business he then had in the temple for his Father.

They understood not his prophetic office; in which he was to do much of his work.

Though Jesus in this instance showed the superior obligation of his great work, yet he went down to Nazareth. Notwithstanding his parents were poor and mean, yet he was subject to them, who was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom. Nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his earthly parents; how then will the foolish and weak answer it, who yet are disobedient to their parents?

His mother, though she did not perfectly understand her Son's sayings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained. However we may neglect men's sayings, because they are obscure, yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, may afterward become plain and easy. We may find use for that, which now we see not how to use.

Though the eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the Divinity that dwelt in Jesus, manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, in proportion to his capacity. As the faculties of his human soul grew more capable, the gifts from the Divine nature were more and more communicated. He increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces which rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his state of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an infant and a child.

The greatest and wisest, those most eminent, may learn of this admirable and Divine Child, that, always remembering our relation to God, ever intent on learning his will, and promoting his glory, we should accommodate ourselves to all the disposals of his providence. How easily could he who discovered such early marks of ability, have eclipsed the most celebrated characters of that learned age; but he laid all aside that he might pursue the duties of the humble rank of life assigned him. Let us learn hence, that it is the truest greatness of soul to know our own place and office; to deny ourselves amusements and gratifications inconsistent with our state and calling.—(80.)

44. The Jews went to Jerusalem at the feast

in large parties, so that Jesus might not be missed by Joseph and Mary till the evening, when each separated to their own family. Probably the three days were occupied, the first in the journey, the second in the return to Jerusalem, on the third Jesus was found in the temple.

46. From *Lightfoot* we learn that there were three courts or councils held in the temple, including the great sanhedrim, in all of which questions might be asked concerning the law. *Townsend* observes, that the answer of Jesus shows that the object of his questions was something beyond mere difficulties of the law. The Messiah was not sent to excite amazement or curiosity. He came to impress upon them some lessons suitable to that time. *Lightfoot* considers that Hillel, the great expounder of the law, died just before this period, but it is probable our Lord was now questioned by other rabbis, who lived at that time, and are known to have been among the most learned and celebrated characters of the nation. Thus the doctrines of truth doubtless were fully set before the most learned of the Jews; but it does not appear that they took any interest in this wonderful Child, though he must have appeared such to them. In the instructions given by the Jewish doctors, questions were frequent, both on the part of the teachers and the taught.

50. "Knew ye not that I must be at my Father's."—*Campbell*. The original may refer either to an employment, or to a house or places. The latter construction appears the most correct, and is considered by the generality of modern commentators as best answering to the question. The Syriac renders it "My Father's house."

### CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—17.	M. 3. 1—12.	Mk. 1. 1—8.
Ver. 19—20.	M. 14. 3, 4.	Mk. 6. 17, 18.
Ver. 21, 22.	M. 3. 13—17.	Mk. 1. 9—11.
Ver. 23—38.	M. 1. 2—16.	

§ 15. Ver. 1—14. *John the Baptist's ministry.*

The original of John's baptism was from heaven. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did; it is the same expression that is used concerning the old testament prophets, Jer. 1. 2: for John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended. The scope and design of his ministry were, to bring the people from their sins, and to their God. He came first into the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise. He came out of the wilderness into that country preaching, not a sect, or party, but a profession; the sign or ceremony was washing with water, by which proselytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, repentance for the remission of sins. All that submitted to his baptism were thereby obliged to repent of their sins, to be sorry for what

they had done amiss, and to do so no more. He bound them, not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way. The design of the gospel, which now began, was, to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, and this is to repent.

They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism John administered bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious discharge from the guilt of sin.

Let us bless God, both for the promises of pardon and the appointment of the seals of it; always remembering the obligation it brings upon us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1.—(80.)

By the words here used we may understand that John preached the necessity of repentance, in order to the remission of sins, and that the baptism of water was an outward symbol of that inward cleansing and renewal of heart, which attend or are the effects of true repentance, as well as a profession of it.

Here is the fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John, Isa. 40. 3. Luke goes further than Matthew and Mark had done, Every valley shall be filled. It seems to be meant of the immediate tendency of John's ministry, and of the gospel of Christ, which that introduced. The humble shall by it be enriched with grace. The proud shall by it be humbled; if they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell. Sinners shall be converted to God. God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked. Difficulties in the way to heaven shall be removed; The rough ways shall be made smooth; and they that love God's law, shall have great peace, and nothing shall offend them. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever. All flesh shall see the salvation of God; not the Jews only but the Gentiles. Some of all shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by captivating high thoughts, and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by levelling the soul, and removing all obstructions

in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome. Thus the Lord's salvation and glory are particularly displayed to mankind, and the gospel is to be universally diffused.

Here are general warnings and exhortations which John gave to those who submitted to his baptism. Observe here,

1. That the guilty corrupted race of mankind is become a generation of vipers; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing them upon the earth.

2. They are fairly warned to flee from the wrath to come, which is certainly before them if they continue in sin. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it.

3. There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance. Those who submitted to the baptism of repentance, thereby evidenced that they were warned to flee from the wrath to come, and took the warning.

4. Those that profess repentance, are highly concerned to live like penitents. By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or not. By the change of our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we are not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church, will stand us in no stead at all. What will it avail us, to be children of godly parents, if we are not godly, if we are not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon outward privileges and professions of religion. God can effectually secure his honour and interest without us.

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater the encouragements given us to repentance, the sorer will our destruction be, if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire, it is the fittest place for them; every tree that does not bring forth fruit, good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Such a discourse, from such a person, occasioned great searchings in the hearts of the people. They found all the vain opinions and presumptions on which they had been accustomed to rely, suddenly taken from them, and nothing left but to seek further directions from this holy,

heavenly preacher. But when a penitent will ask advice of his spiritual guide, he is sensible of his disease, and that is some progress towards a cure.—(32.)

Observe the particular instructions John Baptist gave to several sorts of persons, who inquired of him concerning their duty. Men should not only ask what they must do to be saved, but inquire particularly concerning the proper evidences and effects of saving faith and true repentance, and ministers should be particular in answering such inquiries. Those that are baptized must be taught, and those that have baptized them are concerned to teach them, Matt. 28. 19, 20. Those that profess and promise repentance, must evidence it by reformation, as their place and condition are. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? These persons inquire, not, What shall this man do? but, What shall we do? What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth? John gives answers to all.

He tells the people their duty is to be charitable. He puts those who had superfluities upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessities. The gospel requires mercy, not sacrifice; and its design is, to engage us to do all the good we can. What we have we are but stewards of, and must use it accordingly, as our Master directs. Surely our clearer discoveries of the unspeakable mercy of the Lord Jesus to our sinful souls, ought to make us generous in relieving the distresses of our fellow-sinners.

He tells the publicans, the collectors of the emperor's revenue, their duty. They must do justice between the government and the people, and not oppress them. The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. The same principle which induced them to forego unjust gain, would lead them to make restitution of iniquitous gain.

He tells the soldiers their duty. Those who more than others have their lives at hazard, and are in deaths often, are concerned to inquire what they shall do, that they may be found in peace at the last. John cautions them against the sins that soldiers are commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to keep ourselves from our iniquity. To be content; they that indulge themselves in discontent, expose themselves to many tempta-

tions, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is. Men should be cautioned against the peculiar temptations of their employments.

These answers prescribed the present duty of the inquirers, and formed an immediate test of their sincerity; not that the outward performance of these duties would excuse their continuance in other sins. The whole scripture forbids us to consider any duties as a qualification for applying to Christ; but as none can or will accept his salvation without true repentance, so the evidence and effects of this repentance are here marked out, and in the performance of them the penitent is to wait for the comforts and blessings of free salvation.

1. This was the fifteenth year of Tiberius, reckoning from his association in the empire with Augustus, the thirteenth of his reigning alone.—*Grewell.*

2. At this time it was usual for the high priests to have as coadjutor one who had already discharged the office. Annas was now the coadjutor of his son-in-law Caiaphas.

14. See note, Mark 6. 21. It is evident from the advice given, that these soldiers were not heathens.

§ 15. Ver. 15—20. *John the Baptist testifies concerning Christ.*

All thinking men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Christ or not. He had indeed nothing of the outward grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear; but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority. That which puts people to reason with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

John disowned all pretensions to being himself the Messiah, but he confirmed the people in their expectations of the long promised Messiah. This was an answer to their musings and debates concerning himself. He declared that the utmost he could do was to baptize them with water; he had no access to the Holy Spirit, nor could command that; he could only exhort them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, nor confer remission on them. He pointed them to Jesus Christ, for whom he was sent to prepare the way, and would have them look for him that really was the Messiah.

John was a prophet, more so than any of the old testament prophets; but Christ was a Prophet more than John, for it was both by the Spirit of Christ, and of the grace of Christ, that all the prophets pro-

phesied. This was a great truth which John came to preach; the manner of his expressing it speaks his humility. Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

He owned that Christ had a greater energy than he had, both for the comfort of the faithful, and for the rebuke of hypocrites and dissemblers. John can do no more than baptize with water, in token that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will baptize with the Holy Ghost, he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire clears out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal, that it may be cast into a new mould. John can only preach a distinguishing doctrine, and by word and sign separate between the precious and the vile; but Christ can, and will perfectly part between the wheat and the chaff. This refers to his penetrating, purifying, and transforming influences. John can only speak comfort to those who receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, say to the righteous that it shall be well with them; but Jesus Christ will give them comfort. John can only threaten hypocrites, and tell the barren trees that they shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire; but Christ can executeth at threatening; those that are as chaff,—light, and vain, and worthless,—he will burn with fire unquenchable. John refers here to Mal. 3. 18; 4. 1.

Many other things John preached unto the people in his exhortation, which are not recorded. John was an affectionate preacher; he was beseeching; he pressed things home upon his hearers, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. He was a practical preacher; much of his preaching was exhortation, quickening them to their duty, directing them in it, not amusing them with matters of speculation. He was a popular preacher; though he had scribes and pharisees; men of learning, attending his ministry, and saducees, men of free thought, as they pretended, yet he addressed himself to the people, and accommodated himself to their capacity. He was an evangelical preacher, for so the word here used signifies; he preached the gospel. In all his exhortations, he directed people to Christ; excited and encouraged their expectations of him. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for

righteousness and strength. He was a *copious* preacher; he preached many other things. He shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God; and he varied in his preaching, that those who were not touched and wrought upon by one truth, might be so by another.

A full stop was put to John's preaching when he was in the midst of his usefulness. Herod being reproved by him for many evils—those that are wicked in one instance, commonly are so in many others—he could not bear it, and added this wickedness, which was indeed above all, that he shut up John in prison. We cannot think of God's permitting it, without admiring the depth of the Divine counsels. Must he be silenced, who is the voice of one crying in the wilderness? Must such a preacher be shut up in prison? Thus the faith of his disciples must be tried; thus he must be Christ's forerunner in suffering, as well as in preaching. Reproach and contempt are sure to be the recompense of the faithful reproofs of the faithful servants of God. Yet those who injure them add a greater evil to their other sins; one most expressive of determined enmity to God and holiness.

19. The word "Philip" probably crept into the text by the copyists' negligence.—*T. H. Horne*. It is omitted in many manuscripts, and in most of the early editions.

§ 16. Ver. 21, 22. *The baptism of Christ.*

Notice is here taken of Christ's praying when he was baptized. He did not confess sin, as others did, for he had none to confess; but he prayed, as others did, for he would thus keep up communion with his Father. The inward and spiritual grace which sacraments are the outward and visible signs of, must be sought for by prayer; and therefore prayer must always accompany them. We have reason to think that Christ now prayed for the manifestation of God's favour to him, which immediately followed. He prayed for the discovery of his Father's favour to him, and the descent of the Spirit. What was promised to Christ, he must obtain by prayer; Ask of me, and I will give thee. Thus he would encourage us in prayer.

When he prayed, the heaven was opened. Sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again. Prayer is an ordinance that opens heaven; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily

shape like a dove upon him. When Jesus begins to preach, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. This was expressed by a sensible evidence, for his encouragement in his work, and for the satisfaction of John the Baptist; he was told before, that by this sign should be notified to him, who was the Christ.

There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory, 2 Pet. 1. 17, Thou art my beloved Son. Here, and in Mark, it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew, as spoken of him; in either way it is the same. It was foretold concerning the Messiah, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, 2 Sam. 7. 14. I will make him my First-born, Ps. 89. 27. It was also foretold that he should be God's Elect, in whom his soul delighted, Isa. 42. 1; and, accordingly, it is here declared, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

All the three voices from heaven, by which the Father bare witness to Christ, were pronounced while he was praying, or soon after, Luke 9. 35; John 12. 28.—(80.)

22. *Lightfoot* suggests, that the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, that he might be revealed to be a personal substance, and not merely an operation of the Godhead; and thus was made a full, clear, and sensible demonstration of the Trinity, at the beginning of the gospel; and very fitly is this done at Christ's baptism, who was to make the ordinance of baptism a badge of the profession of that faith, in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

§ 9. Ver. 23—38. *The genealogy of Christ.*

Matthew also gives the pedigree of Christ; he goes no higher than Abraham, but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Jesus was the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and that he was heir to the throne of David; but Luke, designing to show that Jesus was the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree to Adam, beginning with Eli, or Heli, the father, not of Joseph, but of Mary. Marrying the daughter of Heli, perhaps adopted by him, Joseph was considered as his son, and his name inserted as such in the public registers.

The difference between the two evangelists in their respective genealogies of Christ, has been a stumbling-block to infidels who cavil at the word; yet it has been removed by the labours of learned men. But our salvation does not depend

upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the Divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies, either of their own knowledge, or by Divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, as it is in Matthew; and the pedigree of Heli, the father of Mary, as in Luke. This is the meaning of the words, ver. 23, not, "as it was supposed," referring only to Joseph, but, "as we find it upon record," by which it appeared, that Jesus was both by father and mother's side the son of David; witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time compare with the original. This was not contradicted at that time, which is satisfaction to us, that it is a true copy; as it is further worthy of our observing, that, when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all destroyed, with the Jewish state and nation, for then there was no more occasion for their being preserved to prove that the Messiah was the Son of David.

The genealogy concludes with this,—Who was the son of Adam, the son of God. Adam was in a peculiar manner the son of God, being more immediately than any of his offspring, the offspring of God by creation. Christ was both the son of Adam and the Son of God, that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be through him, the sons of God.

If our souls are renewed by the influences of the Holy Spirit to conformity with our Saviour, we shall be evidenced to be in Him the children of our Father, with whom, for his sake, he will be well pleased, though in ourselves most unworthy. Thus also we shall be qualified for every service to which we are called. Are not these privileges worthy of estimation? All flesh, as descended from the first Adam, is as grass, and withers as the flower of the field; but he who partakes of the Spirit of life from the second Adam, hath that eternal happiness, which by the gospel is preached unto us.

Much discussion has arisen respecting the apparent differences between this genealogy and that in Matthew. Only a few conclusions can here be presented to the reader, gathered from the writings of authors who have devoted much time and attention to the subject, and who offer solutions sufficient to satisfy every careful inquirer who will refer to them. The genealogy in Matthew is that of Joseph, Luke gives that of Mary. Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, and as the names of women were never allowed to enter into the Jewish genealogies, his name is inserted instead of that of his wife. Ver. 23 imports, that Jesus was considered according to law, or allowed custom, to be the son of Joseph, as he was of Heli. Salathiel the son of Jechonias also was son-in-law of Neri, ver. 27. See 1 Chron. 3. 17; Matt. 1. 12. Joseph and Mary both descended from Zorobabel; Joseph from Abiud his eldest son, Matt. 1. 13, Mary by Rhesa the youngest, ver. 27. In the person of Zorobabel, the two branches of David's family, those of Nathan and Solomon, were both united by the marriage of Salathiel with the daughter of Neri. Thus Jesus reunited in himself all the rights and privileges of the whole family of David. He is emphatically called, The Son of David. Matthew, writing principally for the Jews, limited his genealogy to Abraham, by whom came the promise of the Messiah to the Jews. Luke, writing for the Gentiles, goes up to Adam, to whom the promise was given in behalf of all his posterity. Cainan, ver. 36, is not found in any other genealogy; it is considered as a surname, or joint name with the one preceding, Sala Cainan, the son of Arphaxad. *Barrett* has entered very fully into the subject, and by a minute investigation shows that there are some interpolations, omissions and transpositions in the genealogies, which he satisfactorily removes by comparing these tables with each other and those in the O. T. See *A. Clarke, Townsend, and Hales. Bp. Horne* notices various causes which would tend to perplex the Jewish genealogies; and observes, that whatever evils *modern* Jews raise on the subject, the *ancient* Jews, who were contemporaries with the evangelists and lived soon after, never objected to them. It may be well to observe the allegations against the early chapters of Luke and Matthew, by some writers, who deny the Divinity of Christ, as wholly undeserving of notice.

## CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1—14.	M. 4. 1—12.	Mk. 1. 12—14.
Ver. 31—37.	M. 4. 13.	Mk. 1. 21—28.
Ver. 38—44.	M. 8. 14—17.	Mk. 1. 29—39.

§ 17. Ver. 1—13. *The temptation of Christ.*

The last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the son of Adam, speak him to be the Seed of the woman: we have him here, according to the promise, breaking the serpent's head, foiling Satan in all his temptations. Observe how Jesus was prepared for this encounter. He had more of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Ghost than ever before. Those are well armed against the strongest temptations, who are full of the Holy Ghost.



During the forty days in which Christ was tempted of the devil he was "carried about," or continually sustained and supported by the Holy Ghost. Let those who are tempted by Satan look for, and, in virtue of the power and intercession of Christ, claim the same support.—(11.)

He was newly returned from Jordan, where he was baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God. When we have had the most comfortable communion with God, and the clearest discoveries of his favour to us, we may expect that Satan will set upon us, and that God will suffer him to do so, that the power of his grace may be manifested and magnified.

His being led into the wilderness gave advantage to the tempter; for there he was alone, none were with him by whose prayers and advice he might be assisted in the hour of temptation. He who knew his own strength might give Satan advantage; we may not, who know our own weakness.

At the end of forty days the devil came nearer, and as it were closed with Jesus; when he perceived that he was a hungered.

Satan tempted Christ to provide for himself in a way his Father had not appointed. If we think of living by our forecast, without depending on Divine Providence; of getting wealth by our might and the power of our hands; we must look upon it as a temptation of Satan, and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to think ourselves independent of God. Christ yielded not to the temptation. We must not do any thing like giving place to the devil. Jesus wrought miracles to ratify his doctrine, and till he began to preach he would not begin to work miracles. He would not work miracles for his own supply; he came not to please himself, but to suffer grief. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, he would, like the other children of God, live in dependence upon the Divine Providence and promise; and trust God either to send him a supply into the wilderness, or to lead him to a city of habitation where there was a supply. He returned a scripture answer; it is written. This is the first word recorded as spoken by Christ after his entry on his prophetic office; and it shows that he came to assert and maintain the authority of the scripture as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself. The word of God is our sword, and faith in that

word is our shield; we should therefore know what is written, for it is for our learning, for our use. The scripture is quoted from Deut. 8. 3, Man shall not live by bread alone. I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send manna for my nourishment, as he did for Israel; man can live by every word of God, by whatever God will appoint that he shall live by. God has many ways of providing for his people, and therefore is at all times to be depended upon in the way of duty.

Satan tempted Christ to accept from him the kingdom, which, as the Son of God, he expected to receive from his Father, and to do him homage for it. He alleged, that he had power to dispose of the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, and to give them to whomsoever he would, and offered to give them to him. He claimed his power as Satan, and as delivered to him by the kings and people of these kingdoms, Eph. 2. 2. Hence he is called the god of this world, and the prince of this world. The heathen, saith he, are my subjects; but they shall be thine, I will give them thee, upon condition that thou worship me for them. All Satan's promises are deceitful; and if he is permitted to have any influence in disposing of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, he only uses them as baits to ensnare men to destruction.

He demanded homage and adoration from Christ; If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine. Let who will take the wealth and grandeur of this earth, Satan has all he would have, if he can but have men's hearts, affections, and adorations. We should reject with decision and abhorrence, every opportunity of sinful gain or advancement, as a price offered for our souls; we should seek riches, honours, and happiness in the worship and service of God only.

Our Lord Jesus gave a peremptory repulse. Such a temptation was not to be reasoned with, but immediately refused. Christ will not worship Satan; nor, when he has the kingdoms of the world delivered to him by his Father, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. This Divine law Christ will re-establish among men, That God only is to be served and worshipped; therefore whoever sets up any creature as the object of religious worship, though a saint, or an angel, or the virgin Mary herself, directly opposes Christ.

Satan also tempted Jesus to be his own murderer, in presumptuous confidence of his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. St. Luke mentions this temptation last; but St. Matthew seems to have been more observant of the order of time in his narration.

He would have him seek a new proof of his being the Son of God, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient; as if God had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it. He would have him seek a new method of publishing this to the world. The devil, in effect, suggests, that he was attested to be the Son of God in an obscure corner, among a company of ordinary people who attended John's baptism; but if he would now declare from the pinnacle of the temple, among all the great people who attended the temple service, that he was the Son of God, and then, to prove it, throw himself down unhurt, he would be received by every body as a Messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have Christ seek honours of his devising, in contempt of those which God had put on him.

He suggested, It is written, ver. 10. It is usual with heretics and seducers to pervert scripture to the service of wickedness. God has promised the protection of angels, to encourage us to trust him, not to tempt him. As far as the promise of God's presence with us, so far only the promise of the angels' ministration, but no further.

Satan was defeated in the temptation. Christ quoted Deut. 6. 16, where it is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, by desiring a sign for the proof of Divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient. Of this Christ would be guilty if he should say, He did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the greater; but can he also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the less?

Let not any abuse of scripture by Satan or by men abate our esteem, or cause us to abandon its use, but let us study it still, labour to be acquainted with it; make it our magazine, have ready our defences from thence in all kinds of assaults. Let this word dwell richly in us, for it is our life. And in all conflicts continue fight-

ing in thy Lord's strength, give not over, resist still, and the enemy shall flee.—(88.)

Our victorious Redeemer conquered, not for himself only, but for us also. The devil ended all the temptation. Christ let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. Did Christ suffer, being tempted, till all the temptation was ended, and must not we expect also to pass all our trials, to go through the hour of temptation assigned us?

Satan then departed from him, saw it was to no purpose to attack Christ, who had nothing in him for his fiery darts to fasten upon. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Yet he departed but for a season, or till the season when he was again to be let loose upon Jesus, not as a tempter, to draw him to sin, and so to strike at his head, at which he now aimed and was wholly defeated in; but as a persecutor, to bring Christ to suffer by Judas, and so to bruise his heel, which it was told him, Gen. 3. 15, he would do, though it would be the breaking of his own head. He then departed till that season came, which Christ calls the power of darkness, ch. 22. 53, when the prince of this world would again come, John 14. 30. Though Satan depart for a season, we shall never be out of his reach till removed from this present evil world.

2. Several remarkable coincidences of forty days, connected with important events, may be observed in scripture.—In the accounts of this temptation the evil spirit is called by the three names which characterise him as the destroyer of men. Their enemy, Satan; their accuser, Diabolus, or the devil; and the Tempter.

5. As the Gentiles did not enter into the Jewish views of a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, this temptation would appear to them only addressed to the desire of wealth, honour, and power, and as inferior in strength to one addressed to the display of superior worth, goodness, or estimation in the sight of God. St. Luke therefore places that the last as being the most difficult to overcome.—Greswell and others.

§ 23. Ver. 14—30. Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth.

The same Spirit that qualified Christ for the exercise of his prophetic office, strongly inclined him to it. He taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met, for acts of devotion, to read, expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise; these were numerous and constantly attended after the captivity. He stood up to read. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue.

He read one of the lessons out of the prophets. The reading of the scriptures is very proper in religious assemblies; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to be employed in it. The book of Isaiah was delivered to him. He found the place appointed to be read that day, and took it for his text. It gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do.

Observe how he was qualified for the work; The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, John 3. 34. The Spirit must discover Christ in our hearts in all his gracious offices. Under his blessed influence we shall perceive the message of the gospel is indeed glad tidings to the poor and humble.—He is to preach.

1. Deliverance to the captives. By Christ sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is deliverance from the worst thralldom.

2. Recovering of sight to the blind. He came, not only by the word of his gospel, to bring light to them that sat in the dark, but by the power of his grace, to give sight to them that were blind; not only to the Gentile world, but to every unregenerate soul. If our prayer be, Lord, that our eyes may be opened, his answer shall be, Receive your sight.

3. The acceptable year of the Lord. He came to let the world know that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them; that there is now a time of good-will toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or that of jubilee. It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation. Let sinners attend to the Saviour's invitation when liberty is thus proclaimed.

Observe also, Christ came as a Physician, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those troubled and humbled for sins, and therefore under a dread of God's wrath against them, and to bring those to rest who were weary and heavy laden under the burden of guilt and corruption; and also to be a great Redeemer. He sets at liberty those who are bruised; he by his Spirit inclines and enables them to use the liberty granted. The prophets could only proclaim liberty, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive

sins, came to set at liberty, therefore this clause is added.

Here is Christ's application of this text to himself, ver. 21. When he had read it, he rolled up the book, and sat down, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers. He began his discourse thus, This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears. It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the kingdom of heaven at hand; that was preaching all the blessings of the acceptable year of the Lord; for many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister; for as the eye affects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering or fixed as that is. And let us keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister.

They all bare witness that he spake admirably well, and to the purpose; yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him! It is possible that admirers of good ministers, and good preaching, may yet be no true christians. They admired the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth—the words of grace, and spoken in a winning, melting way. Christ's words are words of grace. Christ's name was Wonderful, in nothing was he more so than in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as mankind. But they said, Is not this Joseph's son? Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

Christ anticipated an objection, which he knew to be in the minds of many of his hearers. Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself. Most of Christ's miracles were cures. They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, only because they hoped they were the introduction to some wondrous works. Why should not his neighbours and acquaintance have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other? He answers this objection by a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his residence. When prophets have been sent

with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own countrymen, who have known their extraction and education, have received them. Some prejudice often furnishes an objection against the humbling doctrine of the cross; and while it is the word that excites their enmity, they will blame something in the conduct or manner of the speaker. Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

He gives examples of two of the most famous prophets of the old testament, who dispensed favours among foreigners, rather than among their own countrymen, no doubt, by Divine direction. As God by Elijah showed himself a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles. Many lepers were in Israel, yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them. Christ mentions these instances, to show that he dispensed the favour of his miracles according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazarenes to Christ, Physician, heal thyself.

Christ was persecuted at Nazareth. They were provoked by his noticing the favour God showed to the Gentiles by Elijah and Elisha. If they had placed faith in the gracious words of Christ they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words, to take heed of sinning away their opportunities. But they were angry he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that former idolatrous age. What especially exasperated them was, that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles. Their pious ancestors were pleased with the promise of adding the Gentiles to the church; see many of David's psalms and Isaiah's prophecies; but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that others should be taken in. The doctrine of God's sovereignty peculiarly exasperates proud men. They will not seek his favour in his own way; and are enraged when others are admitted to the favours they have neglected.

They forgot the holiness of the day, and the purposes for which they were assembled. They thrust from them the Saviour

and his salvation. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven! But this was the day of his patience. Though they knew how unblamably he had for many years lived among them; though they heard such a good report of him, and had but just now themselves admired his gracious words; yet they hurried him away, to put him to death.

He restrained them, so that they could not do what they designed. His work was not done, it was but just begun, his hour was not yet come. When it was come, he freely surrendered. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not, therefore their house was left to them desolate.

Still is Jesus disdainfully rejected by multitudes who hear the same message echoed from his words. There is malignity in the hearts of sinners, which might lead those of our days to the same wickedness, were their opportunities the same. While they crucify him afresh by their sins, may we honour him as the Son of God, the Saviour of men, and labour to manifest, by the ardour of our love and the steadiness of our obedience, the ingratitude of those who, while opposing Christ, are destroying themselves.—(80.)

16. This passage shows the attendance of the Jews at that time, on the synagogue, as well as the temple worship, and that our Lord was accustomed to join in these public religious ordinances. The synagogue service consisted of prayer, reading the scriptures, and exposition or preaching. The teaching and preaching in these services were not confined to the priests and Levites. The portion read by our Lord was appointed for the synagogue worship about the end of August, and our Lord may have been called out expressly by the minister to read it, according to the forms of Jewish worship, or he may have turned to it when reading some other passage, as was permitted to be done. *Whitby*, and others show that the Jews applied these words of Isaiah to the Messiah. Books then were long pieces of parchment fastened to two sticks or handles, and the reader rolled and unrolled the book as he proceeded.

§ 27, 28. Ver. 31—44. *Christ casts out an unclean spirit, and heals the sick.*

When Christ was expelled Nazareth, he came to Capernaum. Observe his preaching. He taught them on the sabbath-days. In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we worship God, and it is a proper work for sabbath-days. Christ's preaching much affected the people. The doctrine itself was astonishing, and his word was with power; there was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the consciences of men.

These miracles showed Christ to be,—

1. A Controller and Conqueror of Satan. Even the devils know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God, that is sent of God, and is a Holy One. Unclean spirits are subject to continual terror. Those whom Satan cannot destroy, he will hurt as much as he can, but this is a comfort, he can harm them no further than Christ permits. He came out, and the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage. No one doubted the truth of the miracle, it was evident beyond contradiction, nor was any thing suggested to diminish the glory.

2. Christ showed himself to be a Healer of diseases. Here we have his curing a fever with a word. Even families that Christ visits, may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his distinguishing favours are liable to the common calamities of this life. Believers may sometimes be exercised with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others. No age can exempt from diseases. They besought him for the sufferer; and there is a particular promise, that the prayers of faith shall benefit the sick. Christ has a tender concern for his people when in sickness and distress; He stood over the woman as compassionating her case. Christ had, and still has sovereign power over all bodily diseases; He rebuked the fever, commanded it away, and it left her. Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, he expects that it should be a new life indeed, and spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. And those that minister to Christ, must be ready to minister to all that are his, for his sake. We must study to be grateful to those that have prayed for us. He cured many that were diseased, all that made their application to him; it was when the sun was setting, in the evening of that sabbath-day which he had spent in the synagogue. It is good to abound in the work of the sabbath-day, in some good work or other, even till sun-set. He cured all, poor as well as rich, and though sick of divers diseases; so that there was no room to suspect he had only a specific for some one disease. The sign he used in healing was laying hands on the sick; not lifting up his hands for them, for he healed by his own almighty power.

Our business should be to spread abroad Christ's fame in every place, to beseech

him in behalf of those diseased in body or mind, and to use our influence in bringing sinners to him, that his hands may be laid upon them for their healing.

He cast the devils out of many who were possessed. Confessions were extorted from the demoniacs, they crying with rage and indignation; Christ rebuked them, and did not suffer them to say they knew him to be the Christ, that it might appear, beyond contradiction, that he had obtained conquest over them, not made a compact with them.

He retired for a while into a place of solitude; it was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; he never indulged himself in ease. When it was day, Jesus went into a desert place, not to live like a hermit, but to be alone with God, as even those should be, and contrive to be, who are most engaged in public work, else their work will go on poorly.

He returned again to the places of concourse, and to the work he had to do there. We were not sent into this world, to live to ourselves only, but to glorify God, and to do good in our generation. The people sought him, and came unto him. A desert is no desert, if we are with Christ there. It ought not to discourage the ministers of Christ, that some reject them, they will meet with others who will welcome them and their message.

He chose to diffuse the light of his gospel to many places. Those who enjoy the benefit of the gospel must be willing that others should share the benefit. Our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them.

He will continue with us, by his word and Spirit, and extend the same blessings to other nations also, till throughout the earth, the servants and worshippers of Satan are brought to acknowledge him as the Christ, the Son of God, and find redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

31. 32. At Capernaum, our Lord would be under the protection of the nobleman whose son he had healed, John 4. 46, by residing there he continued to fulfil the prophecy, Isa. 9. 1.

## CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1—11. M. 4. 18—22. Mk. 1. 16—20.  
Ver. 12—16. M. 8. 2—4. Mk. 1. 40—45.  
Ver. 17—39. M. 9. 2—17. Mk. 2. 1—22.

† 36. Ver. 1—11. *The miraculous draught of fishes.—Peter, James, and John called.*

When multitudes press to hear the

word of God, it becomes necessary to use extraordinary measures of diligence in teaching them. On such occasions, every place and every day are seasonable, and proper for preaching the gospel. The people pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God; they could perceive it to be the word of God, by the Divine power and evidence that went along with it, therefore they coveted to hear it.

He stood by the lake of Gennesaret. Every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, so he went into the ship that belonged to Simon. There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord. These fishermen had some conversation with him before at John's baptism, John 1. 40; but now were called into more intimate fellowship with Christ. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply to the business of his calling. Time spent on week days, in public exercises of religion, need be but little hinderance in time, and may be great furtherance to us in temper of mind, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been with God, and thus have our worldly employments sanctified to us by the word and prayer!

Christ ordered Peter and his crew to cast their nets into the sea, which they do, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at work all night, and had caught nothing. Some might have thought that should have excused them from hearing the sermon; but such love had they to the word of God, that it was refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night. They mention it to Christ, when he bids them fish again. When tired with worldly business, and crossed in worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him. But we must do our duty, and leave the event to God.

Though they have taken nothing, yet if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. We must not abruptly quit our callings because we have not the success in them we desire. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down their nets though they have toiled long and caught nothing. In this they have dependence on the word of Christ. We are likely to speed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

The draught of fishes was miraculous. By this Christ showed his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land. He hereby confirmed the doctrine he had just now preached. He hereby repaid Peter for the loan of his boat. Christ's recompenses for services done to his name are abundant. He hereby gave a specimen of their success to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles, that those best acquainted with them most admired them. And when Christ's works of wonder are works of grace to us, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

Had not the partners assisted, the net must have been broken, and all the fish lost. Did more help each other in the spirit of christian fellowship, more souls might be brought to the knowledge of the truth. It is intolerable pride to think nothing well done but what we do ourselves.—(11.)

Peter, above all the rest, was so astonished, that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat. His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make; I am a sinful man, O Lord. Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to Him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply? Considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God, and to dread his wrath, Peter might well, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, cry out on a sudden, Depart from me. Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us. But we must fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for woe unto us, if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man. Rather let us entreat him to come and dwell in our hearts by faith, that he may transform and cleanse them.

Christ took occasion from hence to intimate to Peter, and soon after to James and John, Matt. 4. 21, his purpose to make them his apostles. He said unto Simon, Thou shalt both see and do

greater things than these; fear not. When by Peter's preaching three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered. These fishermen forsook all, and followed him, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ, than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable, that they left all to follow Christ, when their calling prospered, and they had uncommon success in it. When riches increase, and we are therefore most in temptation to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ is thankworthy.

§ 29. Ver. 12-16. *A leper cleansed.*

Here is the cleansing of a leper. This man is said to be full of leprosy, he had that distemper in a high degree, which fitly represents our natural pollution by sin; we are full of that leprosy; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in us.

Strong confidence and humility are united in the words of this leper. Confidence, asserting full power in Christ for the work; humility, in the way of proposing it. The sense of his vile disease and unworthiness depressing him, he represented the matter with humble submission, not to complain if refused, but to acknowledge pure compassion and goodness if obtained. Lord, it becomes not such a horrid, polluted wretch to say further than this, I believe if thou wilt thou canst make me clean. And he has straightway real experience, both of the power that he believed in, and the goodwill he had only some hope of. Thus Christ hath revealed to sinners his will together with his power; and that we may not doubt it, we may read it in his blood streaming forth for our cleansing. And if any, from a deep sense of vileness say, I know that he can cleanse me, but will he look upon such a one?—will he apply his own precious blood for my cleansing and healing? Yes, he will. Speak not as doubting, but as humbly referring the matter.—(89.)

Christ is as willing to cleanse leprosy souls as they can be to be cleansed. If Christ saith, I will, be thou justified, be thou sanctified, it is done; for he has power on earth to forgive sin, and power to give the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 11.

Those whom Christ has healed and cleansed must know that he has done

it in such a way as for ever excludes boasting. We must be very thankful, and make a grateful acknowledgment of the Divine grace. We must keep close to our duty. Those who by any affliction have been detained from public ordinances, when the affliction is removed, should attend the more diligently, and adhere to them the more constantly. Being saved from the guilt and power of our sins, we may diffuse abroad Christ's fame; and be instrumental in bringing others to hear him and to be healed.

In tracing the example of our Divine Saviour, we find that he interchanged public services and retired devotion. The sole business of his life, was to do good to men, and to commune with his heavenly Father. Thus our duties should in succession occupy our time, and piety and charity be united in our conduct.

§ 30. Ver. 17-26. *A paralytic cured.*

Certain pharisees and scribes had come to watch our Lord by hearing his doctrines, observing his miracles, and seeking for matter of accusation against him. The power of the Lord was present to heal the sick who were brought to him, not those who came to watch him.

They sat by as censors and spies, to pick up something on which to ground a reproach or accusation. How many are there in the midst of our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, who do not sit under the word, but sit by! It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent them; they are willing that ministers should preach *before* them, not that they should preach *to* them. Observe, Christ went on with his work of preaching and healing, though he saw these pharisees, and doctors of the Jewish church, sitting by, who, he knew, despised him, and watched to ensnare him.

Here is a particular account of the cure of the man sick of the palsy. Observe,

1. The doctrines here taught and confirmed to us. Sin is the fountain of all sickness, and the forgiveness of sin is the only foundation upon which a recovery from sickness can comfortably be built. Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and his healing of diseases was an incontestable proof of it. He did but say, Arise, take up thy couch, and that chronic disease had an instantaneous cure. They must all own that there could be no fallacy in this; they that brought him, could attest how very lame he was

before; they that saw him, could attest how perfectly well he was now. How well is it for us, that this most comfortable doctrine of the gospel, that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, has power to forgive sin, has such a full attestation. Jesus Christ is God. He appears to be so by knowing the thoughts of the scribes and pharisees, and by doing that which their thoughts owned none could do but God only. What horrid wickedness were they guilty of, who charged him with speaking the worst blasphemies, when he spake the best of blessings, Thy sins are forgiven thee!

2. The duties that are taught us, and recommended to us, by this history. In our applications to Christ, we must be very pressing and urgent; that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. He did not ask, Are you so wanting in true faith, as to think I could not have cured him, though he had been out of doors? It is a comfort to us, that we serve a Master who is willing to make the best of us. Christ, in what he said to this man, taught us, when we seek to God for health, to begin with seeking to him for pardon. The mercies of which we have the comfort, God must have the praise of. To him belong the escapes from death, in them therefore he must be glorified. The miracles Christ wrought, were amazing to those who saw them. They said, We have seen strange things to-day. But they glorified God, who had sent into their country such a benefactor to it; and were filled with fear, with a reverence of God.

Give us, Lord, the same kind of faith with respect to thy ability and willingness to heal our souls. Give us to be more desirous of pardoned sin than of any earthly blessing, or of life itself. Enable us to believe thy power to forgive sins; then shall our souls cheerfully arise to go where thou pleasest.—(83.)

20. Our Lord here asserts his power to forgive sins, and by this miracle appeals to the received opinions, as showing him to be the Messiah, possessed of Divine power; for the Jews believed that diseases were the consequences of sin, and that the diseases of the body were not healed till sins which occasioned them were forgiven.

§ 31, 52. Ver. 27—39. *Levi called—Christ's answer to the scribes and pharisees.*

1. It was a wonder of Christ's grace, that he would call a publican to be his disciple and follower, that he would ad-

mit publicans, men of bad reputation. In this, Christ humbled himself, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh; by this he got the invidious character of a friend of publicans and sinners.

2. It was a wonder of his grace that the call was made effectual, and became immediately so. This publican, though those of that employment commonly had little inclination to religion, for his religion's sake left a good place, which probably was his livelihood, and rose up and followed Christ. There is no heart too hard for the spirit and grace of Christ to work upon, nor any difficulties in the way of a sinner's conversion insuperable to his power. When the power of the Lord is present to heal souls, they forego gainful employments because unlawful.

3. It was a wonder of his grace, that he would keep company with unconverted publicans, that he might have an opportunity of doing their souls good; he justified himself in it, as agreeing with the great design of his coming into the world. He came to call sinners, the worst of sinners, to repentance, and to assure them of pardon, upon repentance. This is glad tidings of great joy indeed.

4. It was a wonder of his grace, that he so patiently bore the contradiction of sinners against himself and his disciples, and, instead of taking that occasion to show his displeasure against the pharisees, he showed his compassion to another sort of sinners, and encouraged them.

5. It was a wonder of his grace, that he proportioned the services of his disciples to their strength and standing, and to the circumstances they were in. He insisted most upon that which is the soul of fasting, the mortification of sin, the crucifying of the flesh, and the living a life of self-denial, which is as much better than fasting and bodily penances, as mercy is better than sacrifice.

6. It was a wonder of his grace, that Christ reserved the trials of his disciples for their latter times, when by his grace they were better prepared and fitted for them than they were at first. Christ was then welcomed, wherever he came, and they for his sake; as yet they met with little or no opposition; but this will not last always. When Christ shall leave them with their hearts full of sorrow, their hands full of work, and the world full of enmity and rage against them, then shall they fast, Acts 13, 3.



7. It was a wonder of his grace, that he proportioned their exercises to their strength. He would not put new cloth upon an old garment, nor new wine into old bottles; he would not, as soon as he had called them out of the world, put them upon strictness and austerity of discipleship.

Those who have been used to drink the "old wine" of Divine consolations, and of a close walk with God, have not only lost their relish for earthly joys, but will not be easily brought to attend to what is more showy, but less satisfactory.

The substantial of religion, repentance, faith, and holiness, have been the same from the first revelation of mercy to fallen man, and are far more valuable than mere outward peculiarities of any sect or party.

The Lord trains up his people gradually for the trials allotted them. In wisdom and tenderness he proportions their services to their strength: we should copy his example in dealing with the weak in faith, or the tempted believer.

86. "The piece that was put in from the new."  
—Scholefield.

## CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1—11. M. 12. 1—13. Mk. { 2. 23—28.  
  { 3. 1—5.

Ver. 12-16. M. 10. 2-4. Mk. 8. 13.

§ 33. Ver. 1-5. *The disciples pluck and eat the sabbath.*

Christ justifies his disciples <sup>full</sup> in a work of necessity for themselves on the sabbath-day, and that was plucking the ears of corn when they were hungry. Observe, 1. Christ's disciples ought not to be nice and curious in their diet at any time, especially on sabbath-days, but take what is most easily got, and be thankful. 2. Many that are themselves guilty of the greatest crimes, are forward to censure others for inoffensive actions. 3. Jesus Christ will justify his disciples when unjustly censured, and will own and accept them in many things which men tell them it is not lawful to do. 4. Ceremonial appointments may be dispensed with, in cases of necessity; as the appropriating of the shew-bread to the priests, when David was by providence brought into a strait. 5. Works of necessity are particularly allowable on the sabbath-day; but we must take heed that we turn not this liberty into licentiousness, and abuse God's favours to the prejudice of the work of the day. 6. Christ, though he allowed works of necessity on the sabbath-day, will have us to know and remember it is

his day, and therefore to be spent in his service and to his honour.

Often indeed do nominal christians take occasion from our Lord's concessions respecting the sabbath, to spend this holy day in worldly employments, indulgence, or vain company; but this neither consists with his authority and glory, nor yet with the real good of man, for whose advantage it was instituted. But in the kingdom of the Redeemer, the sabbath-day is turned into a Lord's-day; and it is to be observed chiefly in honour of the Redeemer, as it had been before in honour of the Creator, Jer. 16. 14, 15. In token of this, it shall have a new name, the Lord's day, yet not forgetting the old, for it is a sabbath of rest still, and shall be transferred to a new day, the first of the week.

1. By the second sabbath after the first is meant the first sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread; that on which the wave sheaf was commanded to be offered up, and from which the fifty days to the Pentecost were reckoned.—See *Lightfoot, Whitby, and Doddridge*.

§ 84. Ver. 6—11. *Christ shows that works of mercy are suitable to the sabbath-day.*

Christ justifies himself in doing works of mercy for others on the sabbath-day. Observe in this, 1. Christ on the sabbath-day entered the synagogue. It is our duty to sanctify sabbaths in religious assemblies. On the sabbath our place must not be empty without very good reason. 2. In the synagogue, on the sabbath-day, he taught. Giving and receiving instruction from Christ is very proper work for a sabbath-day, and for a synagogue. Christ took all opportunities to teach, not only his disciples, but the multitude. 3. Christ's patient was one of his hearers; whether this man had any expectation to be healed by him, does not appear. But those that would be cured by the grace of Christ, must be willing to learn the doctrine of Christ. 4. Among the hearers of Christ's excellent doctrine, and the eye-witnesses of his glorious miracles, there were some who came with no other design than to find occasion against him. 5. Christ was neither ashamed nor yet afraid to own the purposes of his grace. He knew their thoughts, and what they designed; he bid the man rise, and stand forth, hereby trying the patient's faith and boldness. 6. He appealed to his adversaries themselves, whether it was the design of the fourth commandment to restrain men from doing good on the sab-

bath-day. No wicked men are so absurd and unreasonable as persecutors, who study to do evil to men for doing good. 7. He healed the poor man, and restored him to the use of his right hand, though he knew that his enemies would take advantage against him for it. Let us not be drawn either from our duty or from our usefulness by opposition therein. 8. His adversaries were enraged the more against him, instead of being brought to love him as a benefactor to mankind. When they could not prevent this miracle, they commended what they might do to Jesus. We may well be amazed, that the sons of men should be so wicked, and that the Son of God should suffer it.

§ 33. Ver. 12-19. *The apostles chosen.*

This evangelist takes frequent notice of Christ's retirements, to give us an example of secret prayer, by which we must keep up our communion with God daily, and without which it is impossible that the soul should prosper. Observe, he was alone with God; he went to a mountain to pray, where he might have no disturbance or interruption. He continued all night in prayer. We often think one half hour a great deal to spend in these duties; but Christ continued whole nights in meditation and secret prayer.

All who have thoughts of being employed as Christ's ministers, should seriously examine their motives, and seek the Divine direction, assistance, and blessing on their undertaking. But while thousands of the votaries of pleasure often pass whole nights in pursuit of it, how rare is it for a christian, or even a minister, to deprive himself of much sleep for retirement and prayer!

After Christ had continued all night in prayer, he called unto him his disciples. In serving God, our great care should be not to lose time, but to make the end of one good duty the beginning of another. The number of the apostles was twelve; in each of the three places where their names are recorded, the order of them differs. Ministers and christians should not be nice in precedency. Concerning the twelve here named, we have reason to say, Never were men so privileged, and yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor! but Christ, when he chose Judas, was not deceived in him.

He came down with the twelve from the mountain, and stood in the plain, and

presently a great multitude of people gathered about him from all parts. They came to hear him, and he preached of them. Those who have not good preaching near them, had better travel far than be without it. It is indeed worth while to go a great way to hear the word of Christ, and to go out of the way of other business for it. They came to be cured by him, and he healed them. Jesus has power over diseases and devils; over the effects and over the causes. Nay, it should seem, those who had no particular diseases, yet found it confirm their bodily health to partake of the virtue that went out of him; for those that were in health as well as those that were sick, were benefited by him. He healed them all: and who is there that does not need, upon some account or other, to be healed? There is a fulness of grace in Christ, and healing virtue in him, and ready to go out from him, that is enough for all, enough for each.

Men regard the diseases of the body as greater evils than those of their souls; but the scripture teaches us differently. If we could obtain the most perfect health, and the longest life that fallen man ever possessed, yet without deliverance from that guilt and pollution of sin, by the power of Christ's blood, and the virtue that proceeds from him, we must be miserable all eternity. Alas, how few apply to Christ for this inestimable benefit!

12. "And spent the whole night in an oratory." The construction of the words require this rendering. The proseuches, or places for prayer among the Jews, were in secluded situations, particularly among the mountains, and were without roofs. See *Whitby*, and *Campbell*. The meaning of the passage is not hereby changed: doubtless our Lord continued all night in meditation and prayer.

§ 36. Ver. 20-26. *Blessings and woes declared.*

Here begins a practical discourse of Christ, most of which is found in Matt. 5. and 7. Some think that this was preached at another time and place.

Christ addressed his disciples, not only the twelve, but the whole company. When he had laid it down for a truth, Blessed are the poor in spirit, he added, Blessed are ye poor. All believers that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves, and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. And the application, as stated here, seems especially designed to encourage the disciples, with reference to

the hardships and difficulties they were likely to meet with in following Christ.

You have left all to follow me, but all your losses shall be abundantly made up to you, for yours is the kingdom of God; all the comforts and graces of his kingdom here, and all the glories and joys of his kingdom hereafter. Christ's poor are rich in faith, Jam. 2. 5. Venture upon your sufferings in full belief that the glory of heaven will abundantly countervail and make up for all these hardships.

Woes are denounced against prospering sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them.

1. Here is a woe to those who trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, but, instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it. They in their life-time received things which, in their account, were the best things. It is the folly of carnal worldlings, that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were intended only for their convenience. Let them know to their terror, that when parted from these things, there is an end of all their comfort; and nothing remains but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a woe to those who are full, and have more than heart could wish, Ps. 73. 7; and that, when they have abundance of the world, are full, and think they have enough. They are full of themselves, without God and Christ: woe to such, for they shall shortly be stripped of all the things they are proud of.

3. Here is a woe to those who laugh now, that know no other use of this world's good than merely to indulge that carnal, sensual joy, which banishes even godly sorrow from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool. They shall mourn and weep shortly, shall mourn and weep eternally, in a world where there is nothing but weeping and wailing, endless, caseless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a woe to those who make it their great and only care to gain the praise and applause of men, who value themselves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance. We should desire the approbation of the wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but as we should despise the reproaches, so we should despise the praises of the fools in Israel.

They are blessed indeed whom Christ blesses, but they must be dreadfully mis-

erable who fall under his woe and curse! What advantage will the saint have over the sinner in the other world, and what a wide difference in their rewards, how much soever the sinner may prosper, and the saint be afflicted here!—(82.)

20. This discourse appears to have been delivered on a different occasion from the sermon on the mount, recorded Matt. 5.—7. In a few passages they resemble each other, but on a general examination they appear to be distinct. The topics in St. Luke are fewer than those in St. Matthew, but are dwelt upon more fully. As to the commencement, an essential difference may be observed. St. Matthew states nine beatitudes; St. Luke only four; and, in the manner of Hebrew parallelisms, Christ contrasts them with four woes, and they are in the latter addressed directly to the disciples, to whom the whole discourse is peculiarly applicable, while in the former they are general rules. A close examination of the conclusions will also show considerable variation. But whether the discourses were delivered on the same or on different occasions, does not in the least affect the truths they contain.

§ 36. Ver. 27—36. *Christ exhorts to mercy.*

Our Master teaches us a hard lesson, not to indulge anger or speak contemptuously of any; not to resist evil by returning it; to be patient under violent and unreasonable compulsion; to help every one, according to his necessity and our abilities; to love, bless, and do good to our enemies. These are hard lessons to flesh and blood. But if we were thoroughly grounded in the faith of his love, it would incline us to learn of him, and make his commands easy to us. Every one that has come to him for washing in his blood, and knows the greatness of the mercy and the love there is in it, can say, in truth and sincerity, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—(71.)

We should be careful that our faithfulness in professing the truth of God, be not leavened with moroseness or resentment. The bolder and more decided we are in the cause of God, the more pliant and passive we ought to be in our own concerns. Such conduct will show the superior excellency of christianity above other systems, and the superior power of Divine grace above other principles. Let us then aim to be merciful, even according to the mercy of our heavenly Father to us poor perishing sinners.

§ 36. Ver. 37—49. *Christ exhorts to justice and sincerity.*

All these sayings Christ often used; it was easy to apply them. We need not be critical here in seeking for the coherence: they are golden sentences, like Solomon's proverbs or parables.

We ought to be very careful in our censures of others; we need allowance ourselves. And to exercise towards others that charity which thinks no evil, which bears all things, believes and hopes all things. Those merciful to other people's names shall find others merciful to theirs.

If we are of a giving and a forgiving spirit, we shall ourselves reap the benefit of it. God will be mindful of the liberal that devise liberal things, ver. 38. God, in his providence, will recompense it to you. Men shall return it into your bosom; for God often uses men as instruments, not only of his avenging, but of his rewarding justice. Those who sow plentifully shall reap plentifully.

Those who deal hardly with others, must acknowledge that God is righteous, if others deal hardly with them; but those who deal kindly with others have reason to hope that, when in need, God will raise them up friends. Though full and exact retributions are reserved for another world, yet, ordinarily, Providence does what is sufficient to deter us from rigour, and to encourage us in doing good.

Those who are led by the common opinion, course, and custom of this world, are themselves blind, and are led by the blind, and will perish with the world that sits in darkness. Those who ignorantly follow the multitude to do evil, follow in the broad way that leads to destruction.

Christ's followers cannot expect better treatment in the world than their Master had. Let them not aim at the worldly pomp and grandeur which he always declined; nor affect power in secular things. But every one who would show himself an established disciple, let him be as his Master, dead to the world, and every thing in it. Let him live a life of labour and self-denial, as his Master.

Persons who rebuke others, should be concerned that they themselves are blameless, harmless, and without rebuke. It is absurd to pretend to be so quick-sighted as to spy small faults in others, like a mote in the eye, when themselves are so perfectly past feeling as not to perceive a beam in their own eye. Those are altogether unfit to help to reform others whose reforming charity does not begin at home. Those who would be serviceable to the souls of others, must first show that they are solicitous about their own souls.

We may expect men's words and actions will be as their hearts and principles.

The tree is known by its fruits, so may the word of Christ be grafted in our hearts, that we may be fruitful in every good word and work, and instructive conversation be as natural to us as corrupt conversation to ungodly men.

The reigning love of God and Christ in the heart denominates a man a good man; and it is a good treasure in the heart, it enriches a man; out of such a good treasure a man may bring forth that which is good; but where the love of the world and the flesh reign, there is an evil treasure in the heart; by what is brought forth you may know what is in the heart, as you may know what is in the vessel by what is drawn out from it. What the mouth ordinarily speaks, generally agrees with what is most in the heart.

It is not enough to hear the sayings of Christ, we must do them; not enough to profess relation to him as his servants, we must make conscience of obeying him. It is deceiving ourselves if we think that a bare profession of religion will save us, that hearing the sayings of Christ will bring us to heaven without doing them. This is illustrated by a similitude.

Those only make sure work for their souls and eternity, and take the course that will profit in a trying time, who think, speak, and act according to the words of Christ. Those who take pains in religion found their hope upon Christ, who is the Rock of ages, and other foundation can no man lay. They shall keep their comfort, and peace, and hope, and joy, in the greatest distresses, for their feet are set upon a rock. Their everlasting welfare is secured. In death and judgment they are safe, being kept by the power of Christ, through faith, unto salvation, and they shall never perish.

The man that rests in merely hearing the sayings of Christ, prepares fatal disappointment; his hopes will fail him when he most needs their comfort, and when he expects their completion. When the stream beats vehemently upon his house, it is gone, the sand it is built upon is washed away, and immediately it falls.

Blessed Lord, teach us by thy Spirit to know thy love, to adore thy grace, and trust in thee; that being grounded on thee, the Rock of our salvation, we may be built up by doing the will of our heavenly Father, and find mercy in the great day, through thee, our blessed Saviour and gracious Redeemer.—(71.)

46. The tongue is fitly compared by one to a pump, which empties the heart, but neither fills nor cleanses it. The love of God is a hidden spring, which supplies the heart continually, and never permits it to be dry or unfruitful.—*Quærel.*

## CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1-10.

M. 8.5-13.

Ver. 18-35.

M. 11.2-19.

§ 37. Ver. 1-10. *The centurion's servant healed.*

The grace of God is communicated to some of every rank, and where it prevails it influences men to a conscientious performance of their duties. The centurion's servant had recommended himself to his master's esteem. Servants should study to endear themselves to their masters. It was likewise the praise of the master, that, when he had a good servant, he knew how to value him. Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are sick. This centurion begged Christ would come, and heal his servant. We may still, by faithful and fervent prayer, apply to Christ, and ought to do so when sickness is in our families; for Christ is still the great Physician.

The elders of the Jews interceded for the centurion, pleading what he would never have pleaded for himself, That he was worthy for whom Jesus should do this. He was well affected to the Jews; he was well affected to their worship. Hereby he testified veneration for the God of Israel, belief of his being the one only living and true God. Building places for religious worship is a good work, and an instance of love to God and his people.

The centurion derived his knowledge of the Supreme Being from the Jews; and religious benefits, as they are incomparably superior to all others, lay a foundation for the strongest attachment among men. If we are taught rightly to appreciate spiritual favours, we shall feel veneration and respect for those who, under God, have been the instruments of conveying them to us, far superior to what we feel towards any other persons.—(38.)

Christ was very ready to show kindness to the centurion. The centurion, when he heard that Christ was doing him the honour to come to his house, gave further proofs both of his humility and of his faith. Thus the graces of the saints are quickened by Christ's approaches toward them. He sends friends, with fresh

expressions of his humility. His faith he shows by a comparison taken from his own profession. Christ has sovereign power over all creatures and all their actions. Our Lord Jesus was pleased with the centurion's faith. He will have his followers observe the great examples of faith sometimes set before them, that they may be shamed, by the strength of faith which others show, under their weaknesses and waverings.

To Christ all things are alike easy, and he never fails to answer the expectations of that faith which honours his power and love. The cure was presently, and perfectly wrought. And this was a specimen of that much greater faith which would be found among the Gentiles, than among the Jews, when the gospel was published to them.

5. It was not unusual for individuals among the Jews to build synagogues; the centurion doubtless was a proselyte.

§ 38. Ver. 11-18. *The widow's son raised.*

Here is a most remarkable miracle. The person raised to life was a young man, cut off by death in the beginning of his days; a common case! He was really dead; there could be no collusion, Christ was entering the town, and had not seen him till he met his body upon the bier. This young man was the only son of his mother, and she a widow. She depended upon him to be the staff of her old age, but he proves a broken reed; every man at his best estate is so! How numerous, how various, how very calamitous, are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! What a vale of tears is it! Much people of the city was with her, condoling with her loss, to comfort her. Christ showed his pity and his power in raising him to life, that he might give a specimen of both, which shine so bright in man's redemption.

When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. Here was no application to him, but the case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. Christ has concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often goes before them with the blessings of his goodness. He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, in his love and in his pity, Isa. 63.9. Let poor widows comfort themselves that Christ pities them, and knows their sorrows; if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ said, Weep

not; he could give a reason no one else could; Weep not for a dead son, for he shall presently become a living one. This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against excessive grief for their death—that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory; therefore we must not sorrow, as those that have no hope, 1 Thess. 4. 13.

See Christ's power over death itself! He came and touched the bier. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own; no more can those spiritually dead in trespasses and sins; yet Christ could bid him arise, power went along with that word, to put life into him. The gospel-call to all people, to young people particularly, is, Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life. Christ's dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word. When Christ put life into him, it appeared by the youth's sitting up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. Another evidence of life was, that he began to speak; whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he opens the lips in prayer and praise. He would not oblige this young man, to whom he had given a new life, to go with him as his disciple, or to get honour by him, but delivered him to his mother, to attend her as became a dutiful son. Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy; and a great act of mercy this was to the widow.

All were struck with wonder at this miracle, and glorified God. The inference they drew was, the great Prophet we have been long looking for is among us. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life, by Divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried over all the country, yet few believed in Jesus and gave up themselves to him. In particular, it was brought to John Baptist, who was in prison. Though he was bound, yet the word of the Lord was not bound: God's work was going on, though he was laid aside.

While many glory in a worthless sensibility, weep over imaginary woes with unmeaning sympathy, and leave real misery to pine in neglect, let the christian rejoice in the compassion of the Lord, and copy it. Let him look for those objects

of distress which lie conceal'd; let him endeavour to soothe the aching heart, to relieve the indigent, and comfort the afflicted. Let us seek for such an interest in our compassionate Saviour, that we may look forward with joyful expectation to the time when the Redeemer's voice shall call forth all that are in their graves, either to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation.

14. In the east, it is usual to carry bodies to the grave upon an open bier or couch, not in a coffin. The burying-places in the east are out of the towns.

§ 33. Ver. 19—35. *John the baptist's inquiry concerning Jesus*

We have here the message John Baptist sent to Christ, and the reply he made. Observe, the great thing we are to inquire concerning is, whether Jesus is He that should come to redeem and save sinners, or whether we are to look for another. We are sure that God has promised that a Saviour shall come, an anointed Saviour; we are sure that what he has promised he will perform.

While John's messengers were with Christ, he wrought miraculous cures. He multiplied the cures, that there might be no ground to suspect a fraud. Then he bid them go tell John what they had seen. He and his disciples might argue, as even the common people did, John 7. 31, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man has done? The cures they saw were not only confirmations of his commission, but explanations of it. The Messiah must come to cure a diseased world, to give light and sight to them that sit in darkness, and to restrain and conquer evil spirits. To his miracles in the kingdom of nature he adds this in the kingdom of grace, To the poor the gospel is preached; which, they knew, was to be done by the Messiah; for he was anointed to preach the gospel to the meek, Isa. 61. 1, and to save the souls of the poor and needy, Ps. 72. 13. Judge whether you can look for any other that will more fully answer the character of the Messiah.

He intimated the danger people were in of being prejudiced against him, notwithstanding these evident proofs of his being the Messiah, ver. 23. His poverty, and the despicableness of his followers—these and the like, were stumbling-blocks to many. That man is blessed, for he is wise, humble, and well disposed, who is

not overcome by these prejudices. It is by God's grace that he is helped over these stumbling-stones.

We have here the encomium which Christ gave of John Baptist; not while his messengers were present, lest he should seem to flatter him, but when they were departed, to make the people sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed in John's ministry. It was an indication of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him to prepare his way, did it by preaching repentance and reformation of heart and life. John was, upon this account, so great, that there was not a greater prophet than he. Yet the least gospel minister that has obtained mercy of the Lord, to be skilful and faithful in his work, or the meanest of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, being employed under a more excellent dispensation, are in a more honourable office than John Baptist. The meanest of those that follow the Lamb, excel the greatest that went before him. Those therefore who live under the gospel dispensation have more to answer for.

We have here the just censure of those who were not wrought upon by the ministry of John Baptist or of Jesus Christ himself. Many had been led to justify God, for they acknowledged the justice of the punishment denounced against them for their sins, and their need of repentance, forgiveness, and a change of heart and life. But the pharisees, who were most in reputation for religion and devotion, and the lawyers, who were celebrated for their learning, especially their knowledge of the scriptures, these rejected the counsel of God against themselves. It was to their own ruin; and they not only excluded themselves, but hindered others.

They made a jest of the methods God took to do them good; Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace, who mind nothing that is serious. This is the ruin of multitudes; they can never persuade themselves to be serious in the concerns of their souls. O the amazing stupidity and vanity of the blind and ungodly world! The Lord awaken them out of their security!

They still found something to carp at. John bore witness to Christ, and Christ applauded John, though the reverse of each other in their way of living. But

the common enemies of both reproached them both. Ill-will never speaks well. See the malice of wicked people, how they put the worst construction upon every thing in the gospel, and in the preachers and professors of it. Notwithstanding this, God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant. Wisdom's children all have complacency in the methods of grace which Divine wisdom takes. Let us study to approve ourselves children of Wisdom, by attending the instructions of God's word, and adoring those mysteries and dispensations which infidels and pharisees deride and blaspheme.

21. Here we see demoniacal possessions "studiously distinguished from bodily disorders, and that by Luke, who was a physician.—*Bloomfield.* He gave sight; literally, "he freely bestowed."

§ 41. Ver. 38—50. *Christ anointed in the house of the pharisee. The parable of the two debtors.*

See the great respect a poor penitent sinner showed to Christ. A woman in the city, who was a sinner, knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, and, having been converted from her wicked course of life by his preaching, she came to acknowledge her obligation to him. She appears to have heard Christ's instructions with great attention, and to have been thereby brought to a deep conviction of her guilt and danger, and to unfeigned repentance for her sins. She seems to have perceived him to be the promised Messiah, a spiritual Redeemer, the Saviour of sinners, and to have expected forgiveness and blessings from him. She wanted to hear more of his encouraging words, and to express her gratitude to him; she therefore followed him into the pharisee's house. She washed his feet with her tears, in token of ready submission to the meanest office in which she might honour him. And she anointed his feet with ointment, owning him thereby to be the Messiah, the Anointed. She thereby showed strong affection to the Lord Jesus. Our Saviour took special notice that she loved much.

None can truly perceive how precious Christ is, and the glory of the gospel, except the broken-hearted. But while they feel they cannot enough express self-abhorrence on account of sin, and admiration of his mercy, the self-sufficient will be disgusted, because the gospel encourages such repenting sinners.

The pharisee, instead of rejoicing in

these tokens of her repentance, confined his thoughts to her former bad character, and began to form an evil opinion of Jesus, because he allowed such a woman to approach him. Christ contrasted her conduct with that of the self-righteous pharisee, who had not treated him even with common respect, according to the customs of those times. He reasons thus : This woman has been a sinner : but she is a pardoned sinner, therefore a penitent sinner ; what she did was an expression of her great love to her Saviour, by whom her sins were forgiven. The pharisee doubted whether Christ was a prophet ; but Christ shows that he was more than a prophet, for he is one that has power on earth to forgive sins, and to whom are owing the affections and thankful acknowledgments of penitent, pardoned sinners. Without free forgiveness none of us can escape the wrath to come ; this our gracious Saviour hath purchased with his blood, that he may freely bestow it on every one that believes in him.

Christ, by a parable, forced Simon to acknowledge that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to show to Him when her sins were pardoned. Now we, being obliged to forgive, as we are, and hope to be forgiven, may from hence learn our duty, for those shall have judgment without mercy, who show no mercy. The debtor that has found his creditor merciful, ought to be grateful to him ; and if he cannot otherwise recompense him, surely ought to love him. But this parable speaks of God as the Creditor, or rather, of the Lord Jesus himself, for he it is that forgives, and is beloved by the debtor, and sinners are the debtors. Learn here,

1. That sin is a debt, all are sinners, and are debtors to Almighty God.

2. Those sinners are greater debtors ; as those that have sinned most openly and scandalously, against greater light and knowledge, more convictions and warnings, and more mercies and means.

3. That, whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay. The debt is great, and we have nothing at all to pay it with. No righteousness of our own will pay it, not even repentance and obedience for the future ; for that is what we are already bound to, and it is God that works it within us.

4. If we repent, and believe in Christ, our iniquity shall not be our ruin, it shall

not be laid to our charge. God is ready to forgive ; and his Son having purchased pardon for penitent believers, his gospel promises it to them, and his Spirit seals it, and gives them the comfort.

5. Those who have their sins pardoned, will love him that pardoned them ; and the more is forgiven them, the more they should love him. When a persecuting Saul became a preaching Paul, he laboured more abundantly than others.

The scanty, formal services of too many prove that they have no proper sense of their guilt, nor right views of the value of Christ, and the redeemed sinner's obligations to him. But when real love to Christ springs from sorrow for sin, and hope of forgiveness through him, and is expressed as a man is able, we may safely believe that his sins, though many, are forgiven, and may give encouragement without making light of his guilt. And when the witnessing Spirit makes it evident to the believer's conscience that he indeed loves Christ, he may know more certainly that his sins are forgiven, than if an angel told him so.

Let who will object, Christ will bid the penitent that applies to him, depart in peace, partaking of salvation through faith in his name. But may we not with shame confess, that while we hope our offences are freely pardoned, we love but little ? If this be the case, we should seek for deeper views of our own vileness, and of our obligations to Christ. Let us keep further from the proud spirit of the pharisee, more simply depending upon and rejoicing in Christ alone, and so be prepared to obey him more zealously, and more strongly to recommend him unto all around us.

He silenced the pharisee ; I say unto thee, Simon, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. It should be rendered, Therefore she loved much ; for it is plain, by Christ's discourse, that her loving much was not the cause, but the effect of her pardon, and of her sense of it ; for we love God because he first loved us ; he did not forgive us because we first loved him. But to whom little is forgiven, as is to thee, the same loveth little, as thou dost. Hereby Christ intimates to the pharisee, that his love to him was so little, that he had reason to question whether he loved him at all in sincerity ; and, consequently, whether his sins were forgiven him. Instead of grudg-



ing greater sinners the mercy they find with Christ, upon their repentance, we should be stirred up by their example to examine ourselves, whether we are indeed forgiven, and do love Christ.

He silenced her fears, who, probably was discouraged by the pharisee, ver. 48. The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins; and what an effectual prevention would this be of her return to sin again! Though there were those present who quarrelled with Christ for presuming to forgive sin, yet he would show that he had pleasure in forgiving sin; he loves to speak pardon and peace to penitents. He said, Thy faith hath saved thee. This would confirm her comfort in the forgiveness of her sin, that she was justified by her faith. All these expressions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, were the effects and products of faith.

What a wonderful change does grace make upon a sinner's heart and life, as well as upon his state before God, in the full remission of all his sins through faith in the Lord Jesus. If he says to any of us, Your sins are pardoned, we may well go on our way rejoicing.—(82.)

37. The anointing of Christ here related, evidently is not the same as that recorded by the other evangelists, and which occurred a few days before the crucifixion. The particular circumstances of neglect enumerated by our Lord, ver. 44-47, show what were the marks of attention and respect then shown to distinguished guests. The word sinner, ver. 39, does not necessarily imply that this woman was a harlot, but may be taken in a more general sense, as ch. 5. 8. Nor is there any circumstance proving it to have been Mary of Magdala, as some have supposed.

47. Or rather, "Therefore she loved much."—A. Clarke.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 4-18.	M. 13. 2-23.	Mk. 4. 1-25.
Ver. 19-21.	M. 12. 46-50.	Mk. 3. 31-34.
Ver. 22.	M. 8. 18.	Mk. 4. 35.
Ver. 22-39.	M. 8. 23-34.	Mk. 4. 36-41.
		Mk. 5. 1-20.
Ver. 41-56.	M. 9. 18-25.	Mk. 5. 22-43.

† 42. Ver. 1-3. *The ministry of Christ.*

We are here told what Christ made the constant business of his life—it was preaching; in that work he was indefatigable. He did not confine himself to one place, but went through every city, that none might plead ignorance. Nor did he confine himself to the cities, but went into the villages. Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings, and those Jesus Christ came to bring.

Certain women attended his ministry, who ministered to him of their substance. Some are named. They were, for the most part, the monuments of his power and mercy; they had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities. Jesus is the Physician both of body and soul, and those who have been healed by him, ought to study what they shall render to him. One was Mary Magdalene, out of whom had been cast seven devils; a certain number for an uncertain. Some think that she had been very wicked. The greatest sinners must not despair of pardon; but the worse any have been before their conversion, the more they should study to work for Christ after. Or rather, she was one that had been very melancholy, and then, probably, it was Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was a woman of a sorrowful spirit; who might have been originally of Magdala, but removed to Bethany. Many of them ministered to Christ of their substance. It showed the mean-condition to which our Saviour humbled himself, that he needed it, and his great humility and condescension that he accepted it. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.

The ministers of Christ should copy his example of constant exertion in preaching the glad tidings of God, and willingly submitting to any outward circumstances which may tend to its success. And those who have profited thereby, should imitate these pious women in supporting his servants according to their ability.

2. There is no scripture authority for supposing Mary of Magdala to have been a harlot; it rather would seem that she was a person of some note. Nor is there any proof that she was the person who anointed Christ's feet, as recorded in the preceding chapter; see note, Mark 14. 3.

§ 49, 45. Ver. 4-21. *The parable of the sower.*

In these verses we have necessary and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word, in the parable of the sower, and the explanation and application of it. Christ made the disciples sensible what an advantage it was that they had opportunity of acquainting themselves with the mystery and meaning of his word. Happy are we, and for ever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a parable to others, with which they are only amused, is a plain truth to us, by which we are enlightened and governed.

The heart of man is as soil to the seed of God's word; and unless that seed be sown in it, it will bring forth nothing

valuable. To what purpose have we the seed in the scripture, if it be not sown? And to what purpose have we the soil in our own hearts, if it be not sown with that seed? The word of the gospel will not be a saving word to us, unless it be mixed with faith; therefore the devil does all he can to make us not heed the word when we read and hear it; or, if we heed it for the present, to make us forget it again, and let it slip, Heb. 2. 1. Or, if we remember it, to create prejudices in our minds against it, or direct our minds from it to something else. This is, lest we should believe and be saved, lest we should believe and rejoice, while Satan believes and trembles. Where the word of God is heard carelessly, there is commonly contempt put upon it also. The seed which fell by the way-side was trodden down, ver. 5. Those who wilfully shut their ears against the word, do in effect trample it under their feet; they despise the commandment of the Lord.

Upon others the word makes some impressions, but they are not deep and durable, for a while they believe, a little while. Their profession promises something, but in time of temptation they fall away from their good beginnings. Whether the temptation arise from the smiles or from the frowns of the world, they are easily overcome by it. The pleasures of this life are thorns, as dangerous and mischievous to choke the good seed of the word, as any other. Those who are not entangled in cares of this life, nor inveigled with the deceitfulness of riches, but boast that they are dead to them, may be kept from heaven by indolence, and the love of ease and pleasure. The delights of sense may ruin the soul, even lawful delights, if indulged, and too much delighted in.

It is not enough that the fruit be brought forth, but it must be brought to perfection, it must be fully ripened; or else it is as if no fruit was brought forth. The good ground, which brings forth good fruit, is a heart fixed for God and duty, a tender heart, and a heart that trembles at the word; which, having heard the word, understands it, so it is in Matthew; receives it, so it is in Mark; and keeps it, so it is here, as the soil not only receives, but keeps the seed. Where the word is well kept, there is fruit brought forth with patience. There must be both bearing patience, and waiting patience;

patience, to suffer the tribulation and persecution which arise because of the word; patience, to continue in well-doing.

We ought to take heed how we hear; take heed of the things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear; take heed less we hear carelessly and slightly, lest we entertain prejudices against the word we hear; and take heed to our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained.

Needful instructions are given to those appointed to preach the word, and to those also that have heard it. Ministers that have the dispensing of the gospel committed to them, and people that have profited by the word, and are thereby qualified to profit others, must look upon themselves as lighted candles, and diffuse their light. The gifts we have, will be continued to us or not, accordingly as we use them for the glory of God, and the edification of our brethren. From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath, so it is in Mark; that which he seemeth to have, so it is in Luke. The grace that is lost was but *seeming* grace, was never true. Men do but seem to have what they do not use, and shows of religion will be lost and forfeited; they went out from us, because they were not of us, 1 John 2. 19. Let us see that the root of the matter be found in us. Nor is it enough not to hold the truth in unrighteousness; we should desire to hold forth the word of life, and to shine, giving light to all around.

Great encouragement is given to those that prove themselves faithful hearers of the word, by being doers of the work, in a particular instance of Christ's respect to his disciples, in preferring them even before his nearest relations. Christ would rather be busy at his work than conversing with his friends. He is pleased to own those as his nearest and dearest relations, that hear the word of God, and do it.

§ 50, 51. Ver. 22—40. *Christ stilleth the tempest and casteth out devils.*

They that observe Christ's orders may assure themselves of his presence. If he sends his disciples, he goes with them. And those may safely and boldly venture any where, that have Him accompanying them. Those that put to sea in a calm, yea, and at Christ's word, must yet prepare for a storm, and for the utmost peril in that storm. Christ was asleep in the storm. Christ's disciples may really have

his gracious presence with them, and yet he may not immediately appear for their relief. Thus he will try their faith and patience, and quicken them by prayer to awake, and makes their deliverance more welcome when it comes at last. The way to have our fears silenced is to bring them to Christ, and lay them before him. Those that in sincerity call Christ Master, and with faith and fervency call upon him as their Master, may be sure he will not let them perish. There is no relief for souls under sense of guilt; and fear of wrath, but to go to Christ, and call him Master, and say, I am undone, if thou do not help me. Christ's business is to allay storms. He can do it, he has done it, he delights to do it; for he came to proclaim peace on earth. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to ourselves the shame of our own fears, and to give Christ the glory of his power.

•Presently after the winds were stilled, they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, and Christ soon met with that which he went through a storm to accomplish. We may learn much out of this history concerning the world of infernal, malignant spirits, which, though not working ordinarily now, in the same way as then, yet we are all concerned at all times to guard against. These malignant spirits are very numerous. They have inveterate enmity to man, and all his comforts. This man, of whom the devils had got possession, and kept it long, being under their influence, wore no clothes, neither abode in any house. They are very strong, fierce, and unruly, and hate and scorn to be restrained. Those that are ungovernable by any other, show that they are under Satan's government. Those under Christ's government are sweetly led with the bands of love; those under the devil's government are furiously driven. The devils are much enraged against our Lord Jesus, and have great dread and horror of him. See whose language they speak, who only dread hell as a place of torment, but do not desire heaven as a place of holiness and love. Yet they are at the command and under the power of our Lord Jesus; and they know it. O what comfort is this to the Lord's people, that all the powers of darkness are under the control of the Lord Jesus! They delight in doing mischief. When the devil first brought man into a miserable state, he brought a curse likewise

upon the whole creation, and that became subject to enmity. Here, as an instance of that enmity, if he could not hurt them in their bodies, he would hurt them in their goods, which sometimes proves a great temptation to draw men from Christ. Christ suffered them to enter the swine, to convince the country what mischief the devil could do in it, if he should suffer him. For it is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan possesses, are not brought to destruction and perdition.

When the devil's power is broken in any soul, that soul recovers itself, and returns into a right frame; those whom Satan gets possession of, are put out of the possession of themselves. If God has possession of us, he preserves to us the government and enjoyment of ourselves; but if Satan has possession of us, he robs us of both. Let his power therefore in our souls be overturned, and let Him come, whose right our hearts are, and let us give them to him; for we never are more our own, than when we are his.

The people thought more of the destruction of the swine than of the deliverance of their poor afflicted neighbour, and of the country from the terror of his frenzy, and besought Christ to depart from them. These Gadarenes were worse possessed than their swine. The devils knowing the hearts of the owners were fast linked to their swine, thought that the swine being drowned the people would follow and drown themselves in rejecting Christ Jesus. And they did so. How many who hear or read of this with indignation, possibly do little better in their hearts, cleaving to things of this earth, and in the love of these refusing Christ! This is a clear instance of misery, yet scarcely to be pitied, they being the choosers and devisers of it, beseeching life and blessedness to leave them — (88.)

The poor man who had been recovered was loth to stay among the Gadarenes, who desired Christ to depart from them. O gather not my soul with these sinners! But we must sometimes deny ourselves the satisfaction even of spiritual benefits and comforts, to gain an opportunity of being serviceable to the souls of others, declaring that none but Jesus can save from the wrath of God and the power of Satan. Christ will not stay with those who slight him; perhaps he may no more return to them, while others are waiting for him, and glad to receive him.

§ 52. Ver. 41-56. *The daughter of Jairus restored to life.*

In the houses where sickness and death are, it is very desirable to have the presence of Christ. When Jesus was going there the people thronged him, some out of curiosity, others out of affection. Let us not complain of a crowd, and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and doing good; but otherwise every wise man will keep himself out of it as much as he can.

Here is a secret application made to Christ by a woman, who took this opportunity of coming to him in a crowd; the more people were present, the more likely it was that she should be concealed. Her faith was very strong, for she doubted not but that by the touch of the hem of his garment she should derive from him healing virtue, looking upon him to be a full fountain of mercies. Thus many a poor soul is healed, and helped, and saved by Christ, that is hidden in a crowd, and nobody takes notice of them. The woman found an immediate change, and that her disease was cured. Believers have comfortable communications from Christ secretly; and joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

Christ noticed that there was a cure wrought; it was his delight that virtue was gone out of him to do good, and he did not grudge it to the meanest; they were as welcome to it as to the light and heat of the sun; nor had he the less virtue *in him* for the going out of virtue *from him*, for he is an overflowing fountain. The consideration that we cannot be hid from Christ, should engage us to pour out our hearts before him, to show before him all our sin and all our trouble. She came trembling, yet her faith saved her. There may be trembling, where yet there is saving faith. She declared before all the people that she had touched him, because she believed a touch would cure her, and it did so. Christ's patients should communicate their experiences to each other. The great Physician confirms her cure. Be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.

Observe Christ's comfort to Jairus, Fear not, believe only, and thy daughter shall be made whole. No less hard was it not to grieve for the loss of an only child, than not to fear the continuance of that grief. But in perfect faith there is no fear; by how much the more we fear,

the less we believe: well then are these two united. O Saviour, if thou didst not command us something beyond nature, it were no thanks to us to obey thee. If thou do but bid my soul to arise from the death of sin, it cannot lie still. If thou bid my body arise from the grave, in vain shall my sin or my grave offer to withhold me from thee.—(34.)

Christ bid them not weep; for she is not dead, but sleepeth. He means, as to her peculiar case, that she should now shortly be raised to life; it would be to her friends as if she had been but a few hours asleep. This is applicable to all that die in the Lord; therefore we should not sorrow for them as those that have no hope, being assured that ere long they shall awake, and rise again to all the glories of eternity. Christ said a comfortable word to these mourners, yet they wickedly ridiculed it. They were ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament, who thought it absurd to call death a sleep; yet some good came out of that evil; thereby the truth of the miracle was evinced, for they knew that she was dead, they were certain of it, therefore nothing less than Divine power could restore her to life.

Christ took her by the hand, as we do by one that we would help up, saying, Maid, arise. Thus the hand of Christ's grace goes with the calls of his word, to make them effectual. Here it is expressed, that her spirit came again; her soul returned again, to animate her body. This proves that the soul exists and acts in a separate state, and therefore is immortal; that death does not extinguish this candle of the Lord. It is not any thing that dies with the body, but something that subsists by itself, which after death is where the body is not; but where the soul of this child was in this interval we are not told. When her spirit came again she arose, and made it appear that she was alive, by her motion, as also by her appetite, for Christ commanded to give her meat. As babes new born, so those newly raised from sin, desire spiritual food, that they may grow thereby.

This miracle of Christ not only was a decided testimony to his Godhead, but it teaches all his redeemed people, that, amidst all the painful circumstances of death, the same power secures for them the resurrection of grace here, and of glory hereafter.—(37.)

## CHAPTER IX.

V.1-6. M. 10. 1, 5-14 Mk. 6. 7-13  
 V.7-10. M. 14. 1, 2. { Mk. 6. 14-16.  
                                   { Mk. 6. 30-31.  
 V.10-17. M. 14. 13-21. Mk. 6. 32-44. J 6.1-14  
 V.18-27 M. 16. 13-28. { Mk. 8. 27-38.  
                                   { Mk. 9.1  
 V.28-45. M. 17.1-23. Mk. 9.2-32.  
 V.46-48. M. 18.1-5. Mk. 9.33-37  
 V.49,50. Mk. 9.38-40.  
 V.57-62. M. 9.19-22.

§ 57. Ver 1-9. *The apostles sent forth.*

Christ now sent his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were able to instruct others, delivering to them what they had received from the Lord. Because it was new and surprising, and very different from what they had been taught by the scribes and pharisees, and because so much depended upon men's receiving or not receiving it, he empowered them to confirm it by miracles, which would make them welcome wherever they came, not only convince people's judgments, but gain their affections.

(Observe, they must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to people's esteem by outward appearance. They must go as they were. They must depend upon Providence, and the kindness of their friends, to supply what was convenient. They must not take either bread or money, yet must believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples shy of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to expect them.

Whatsoever house they entered, there they were to abide, that people might know where to find them, that their enemies might know they were not ashamed or afraid to face them. They must warn those who refused them, as well as comfort those that received them, so that when such perish at last in their infidelity, this will leave it upon their own heads. In prosecuting this commission, they departed from their Master's presence, having still his spiritual presence with them: thus borne up in their work, they went the circuit appointed, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

The Lord Jesus is the fountain of power and authority, to whom all creatures must in one way or another be subject; and if he accompany the word of his ministers with power, to deliver sinners from Satan's bondage, they need not fear but that he will care for their wants. Let them show an interest for the temporal welfare of

those whose salvation they seek. If they can do any thing by the means within their power, to relieve their distresses and heal their diseases, it may promote their work. When truth and love thus go together, and yet the message of God is rejected and despised, it will leave men without excuse, and every circumstance will turn to a testimony against them.

Observe, the people, though they thought not rightly, yet could not but think honourably, of our Lord Jesus. And observe the great perplexity it created in the mind of Herod; his guilty conscience was ready to conclude that John was risen from the dead. He thought he should never more be troubled with him, but either John is come to life again, or here is another in his spirit and power. The increase of faithful ministers, and the spread of the gospel, frequently cause much distress to ungodly men. Herod desired to see Jesus; and why did he not go and see him? Probably, because he thought it below him, either to go to him, or to send for him. He had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for having to do with any more reprovers of sin. Delaying it now, his heart was hardened. and when he did see Jesus, he was as much prejudiced against him as any other, Luke 23. 11.

§ 63. Ver. 10-17. *The multitude miraculously fed by Christ.*

The twelve, when they returned, gave their Master an account of the success of their ministry. He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place, both for the repose of their bodies, and for the furnishing their minds by meditation for further public work.

The people followed Him, though it was in a desert place. And though they came unseasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for. He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, the laws of that kingdom by which they must be bound, and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed. He healed those who had need of healing, and who sensible of their need, made application to him. Though the disease was incurable by physicians, though the patients were poor and mean, yet Christ healed them. There is healing in Christ for all that need it, whether for soul or body. Christ still hath power over bodily diseases. Sometimes he sees that we need the sick-

ness for the good of our souls, more than the healing for the ease of our bodies; and then we must suffer for a season, because there is need to be in heaviness; but when he sees that we need healing, we shall have it. Death is his servant, to heal the saints of all diseases. Christ heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and has for each what their case calls for; relief for every exigence.

With five loaves of bread and two fishes Christ fed five thousand men. This is the only miracle of our Saviour, that is recorded by all the four evangelists. Let us only observe, 1. Those are taken under Christ's particular care who diligently attend upon him in the way of duty, and therein deny or expose themselves; or are made to forget themselves and their outward conveniences, by their zeal for God's house. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing. 2. His disciples said, Send them away, that they may get victuals; but Christ said, No, give ye them to eat. Those who have but a little, let them do what they can with that little, and that is the way to make it more. 3. Christ has provided, not only to save the soul from perishing by its diseases, but to nourish the soul unto life eternal, and strengthen it for all spiritual exercises. 4. All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular orderly manner. The number of each company is noticed, which Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat, and the easier computation of the number of the guests. 5. When we are receiving our creature-comforts, we must acknowledge that we receive them from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them; that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is removed, and the covenant of peace settled; that we depend upon God's blessing to make them serviceable to us, and desire that blessing. 6. The blessing of Christ will make a little go a great way; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for all, so there is enough for each. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken up; we are assured that in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare. We are not straitened, nor stinted in Christ.

{ 73, 74. Ver. 18—27. *Peter's testimony to Christ*  
—*Self-denial enjoined.*

Christ's disciples must learn, from the mistakes of others concerning him, how happy they were in being led to the knowledge of him, and of the truth respecting him. They tell Christ what conjectures concerning him they had heard in their converse with the common people. Ministers know best how to suit their instructions, reproofs, and counsels, to the cases of ordinary people, when they converse frequently and familiarly with them. They are then better able to say what is proper to rectify their notions, and to remove their prejudices.

What they said of him was, Thou art the Christ of God, the Anointed of God, the Messiah promised. It is matter of unspeakable comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is God's Anointed; this signifies that he was both appointed to it, and qualified for it.

Jesus discourses concerning his own sufferings and death. They must not yet preach that he was the Christ, because the wonders that would attend his death and resurrection, would be the most convincing proof of his being the Christ of God. And so far must they be from thinking how to prevent his sufferings, that they must prepare for their own.

We must accustom ourselves to all instances of self-denial and patience. We are daily subject to affliction; and we must acquiesce in the will of God in it, and must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up and carry them after Christ.

We must prefer the salvation and happiness of our souls before any secular concern whatever. We must firmly believe that, if we lose our lives for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall save them to our unspeakable advantage; for the loss shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have a new and an eternal life. If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure in the world, by denying Christ, yet, when by so doing we lose ourselves to all eternity, and so are cast away at last, what good will our worldly gain do us? The soul is the man; and it is well or ill with us, accord-

ing as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever, under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain that we are undone. The body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world.

We must, therefore, never be ashamed of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for adhering to him and to his word. As Christ had, so his cause has, a state of humiliation and of exaltation. They only, that are willing to suffer when it suffers, shall reign with it when it reigns. Observe how Christ, to support himself and his followers under present persecutions, speaks of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he endured the cross, despising the shame. He shall come in his own glory. He shall come in the glory of the Mediator, all that glory which the Father restored to him, which he had with God before the worlds were. He shall come in his Father's glory. The Father will judge the world by him. He shall come in the glory of the holy angels. They shall all attend him, and minister to him. How glorious will the blessed Jesus appear in that day! Did we believe it, we should not be ashamed of him or of his words now.

The truths which relate to the person, sufferings, and mediatorial kingdom of Christ, form the very centre of true religion. In meditating on his crucifixion, and the glory which ensued, we shall best learn to deny ourselves, and to bear our cross daily; we shall thus see the folly and madness of seeking temporal advantages, with the hazard of losing ourselves; we shall get the victory over that foolish and wicked shame, which causes many to forsake and disobey Christ against the convictions of their own consciences.

To encourage them in suffering for him, he assures them, that, though the second coming of the Son of man is at a great distance, the kingdom of God should come while some present were alive. They saw the kingdom of God, when the Spirit was poured out, when the gospel was preached to all the world, and nations were brought to Christ by it; they saw the kingdom of God triumph over the Gentile nations in their conversion, over the Jewish nation in its destruction.

To form some faint idea of that glory,

let us contemplate Christ on the mount. With this before our eyes, we may meditate with advantage on his death, and thence follow him to his present exaltation in heaven. This may reconcile us to present trials, and even to the stroke of death. But we must now walk by faith, and hear obediently the words of the Son of God, treasuring up every experience of his love, and every discovery of his excellency, to be our support in the days of darkness. Thus we may maintain a successful conflict with the enemies of our souls, and hope to be instrumental in rescuing others from their influence.

18. *J. P. Smith* shows the general opinions of the Jews at and near the time of Christ's coming, respecting the character and person of their expected Messiah, to have been, 1. Sublime. This is manifest from their attributing to him dignity above all created objects, and properties peculiar to the Deity. 2. Imperfectly understood. This could not but be the case from the nature of the subject, the reference to a future and unknown time, and the necessary obscurity belonging to unfulfilled prophecy. 3. Inconsistent. Their hopes of the Messiah became closely united with their national pride and wishes for universal ascendancy. The bulk of the nation lost sight of the spiritual and holy objects, with which the language of prophecy surrounds its descriptions of the Messiah; and sunk into the habit of regarding him as a politician and a hero. Such an opinion disposed them to view their great Deliverer merely as a man, and as a man of the world, earthly and carnal in his purposes and character. At the same time, the vestiges of purer sentiments still lingered in the hearts of many, who considered the best consolation of Israel, to consist in a holy salvation and in a spiritual Redeemer.

§ 75. Ver. 28—36. *The transfiguration.*

Christ's transfiguration was a specimen of that glory in which he will come to judge the world; consequently, an encouragement to his disciples to suffer for him. It is well worthy to be considered by us, for the confirmation of our faith in the Lord Jesus, as the brightness of his Father's glory, and the light of the world. It should fill our minds with high and honourable thoughts of him, notwithstanding his being clothed with a body, and to give us some faint idea of the glory which he entered into at his ascension; also for encouraging our expectations concerning the glory reserved for all believers in the future state.

Here are divers circumstances added and explained, which are material. We are here told that Christ had this honour put upon him when praying; when Christ

humbled himself to pray, he was thus exalted. He knew that it was designed for him at this time, and therefore seeks it by prayer, Ps. 2. 8. And thus he put an honour upon the duty of prayer, and recommends it to us. Prayer is a transfiguring, transforming duty. By prayer we fetch in the wisdom, grace, and joy, which make the face to shine.

Luke does not use the word transfigured, but a phrase very like it—The fashion of Christ's countenance was changed from what it had been; his raiment was white and glistering; bright like lightning; so that he seemed to be arrayed with light, to cover himself with light as a garment.

Moses and Elias appeared in glory, to teach us, that saints departed are in a glorious state. They spake of his decease at Jerusalem—his exodus, his departure; that is, his death. This he must accomplish, for thus it was determined in the counsel of God. He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, though his residence was mostly in Galilee; his most spiteful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the sanhedrim sat, who took upon them to judge of prophets. Our Lord Jesus, even in his transfiguration, was willing to discourse concerning his death and sufferings. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that in this world we have no continuing city.

• The disciples were heavy with sleep when Christ was in his glory, as afterwards they were when he was in his agony. See the weakness and frailty of human nature, even in the best men. Nothing could be more affecting to these disciples, one would think, than the glories and the agonies of their Master, and both in the highest degree. What need have we to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us lively! Yet that they might be competent witnesses of this sign from heaven, to those that demanded one, after a while they became perfectly awake; so that they were able to give a particular account of what passed when they were with Christ in the holy mount, 2 Pet. 1. 17.

It was when Moses and Elias were now about to depart, that Peter said, Lord, it is good to be here; let us make three tabernacles. We often are not sensible of the worth of our mercies, till we are about to lose them; nor do we covet their continuance till they are upon the departure. Peter said this, not knowing what he said. Those know not what they

say, that talk of making tabernacles on earth for glorified saints in heaven, who have better mansions there.

It is here added concerning the cloud that overshadowed them, that they feared as they entered the cloud. This cloud was a token of God's more peculiar presence. Never let any be afraid to enter into a cloud with Jesus Christ, for he will be sure to bring them safe through it.

Elias was changed, Moses slept, but both appeared, to teach us that neither our sleep nor our change can keep us from appearing with Christ. When, therefore, we shall undergo the sentence of death, or the fiery chariot shall sweep us from this vale of mortality, 1 Thess. 4. 17, may the glorious reappearing with our Saviour comfort us; may we cheerfully triumph over the last enemy, outfacing his terrors with the assurance of a blessed resurrection to glory.—(34.)

28. Matthew and Mark say, after six days. Luke includes the day of the discourse of our Lord just mentioned, and the day of the transfiguration; the others mean six clear days. This double mode of computation, sometimes inclusive and sometimes exclusive, accounts for many apparent differences both in the O. and N. T.

§ 76. Ver. 37—42. *An evil spirit cast out.*

The people were forward to receive Christ at his return; so it was foretold concerning him, that to him should the gathering of the people be. How importunate the father of the lunatic child was with Christ! I beseech thee, look upon my son; that is his request: one compassionate look from Christ is enough to set every thing to rights. Let us bring ourselves and our children to Christ, to be looked upon. Those who have many children, may balance affliction in one, with their comfort in the rest. But his plea is, He is mine only child!

How deplorable the case of the child! He was under the power of an evil spirit. Diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes. This malicious spirit tare him, and departed not from him, but with great difficulty, and a deadly gripe at parting. Oh the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! What mischief Satan does where he gets possession! But happy they that have access to Christ!

The disciples distrusted the power they were to fetch strength from, or the commission given to them, or they did not exert themselves in prayer as they ought. But Christ can do that for us which his



disciples cannot. The devil threw the child down, and tare him—distorted him. But one word from Christ healed the child. It is added, that he delivered him again to his father. When our children recover from sickness, we must receive them as delivered to us from the dead, and as when we first received them. It is comfortable to receive them from the hand of Christ. Take this child, and be thankful; take it, and bring it up for me, for thou hast it again from me. Take it, and do not set thy heart too much upon it. With such cautions as these, parents should receive their children from Christ's hands, and then with comfort put them again into his hands.

Whenever Satan has got possession, he will keep it as long as he can, and the sooner he gets possession in the days of youth, the more loth he is to quit, and the harder it is for us at his parting. But Christ, as sovereign Lord of all, can command him out.—(82.)

§ 77, 79. Ver. 43—50. *Christ checks the ambition of his disciples.* \*

The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that were wrought by the hand of the Lord Jesus. When we find ourselves unable to understand the words of Christ, we should not fear or neglect to ask him, and to consult his more experienced servants concerning them. But alas, our reasonings and discussions, instead of being to edification, too often are mere disputes which shall be the greatest. This may be disguised, but applause, popularity, and precedence are too much aimed at by professing christians, even by ministers. These thoughts of our foolish hearts Jesus perceives. He gave notice to his disciples of his approaching sufferings. That which is peculiar here is, the connexion of this with the admiration with which the people were struck at beholding Christ's miracles. The disciples expected that he should reign, and they with him, in worldly pomp and power; and now they thought that his mighty power would easily effect these things, and his interest gained in the people by miracles would contribute to it; therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, tells them again, that so far from living in honour, he must die in disgrace. Observe the solemn preface with which it is introduced. The word of Christ does us no good, unless we let it sink down into our heads and hearts.

This prediction of Christ's sufferings was plain enough, but they would not understand it in the literal sense, because it agreed not with their notions.

They understood not this saying, for the doctrine of the atonement was not thoroughly understood till life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. This doctrine was a stumbling block to the apostles and their countrymen. It was, and ever will be, foolishness to the Greeks, all of a speculative, presumptuous, philosophizing character. Human reason must be submitted to the gospel. There must be a prostration of the pride of human intellect at the foot of the cross, before men can, with proper humility, believe in the salvation purchased for them through the atonement of a Divine Being for the sins of man. He who rejects this doctrine counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and violently separates the bond of love which unites fallen man to the mercy of his Creator.—(62.)

A little child is Christ's constant emblem, by which to teach us simplicity and humility. Whosoever shall receive one such child, a preacher of the gospel of such a disposition as this, he places his respect aright, and receives me; and whosoever receives me in such a minister, receives Him that sent me. What greater honour can any man attain to in this world, than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him? This honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great, that are least among them.

Christ rebuked his disciples for discouraging one that honoured him and served him, yet who not only was not one of the twelve, or one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associated with them, or attended on them. If ever any society of christians in this world had reason to silence those that were not of their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; yet Christ warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be the successors of the apostles. The church must not lose any of its friends, while it has so few, and so many enemies. Those may be found faithful followers of Christ, and may be accepted of him, who do not follow with us. O what mischief to the church, even from those that boast of

relation to Christ, and pretend to envy for his sake, would be prevented, if this passage of history were duly considered !

45. The Jews in general then expected that their Messiah should live for ever. Afterwards they invented the distinction between a Messiah Ben Joseph who was to die, and a Messiah Ben David who was to live for ever.—*Whitby*.

49. Perhaps a disciple of John the Baptist.—*Whitby*.

§ 95. Ver. 51—56. *Christ reproves the mistaken zeal of his disciples.*

When Christ saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them, and beyond them, to the glory that should follow ; he looked upon it as the time when he should be received up into glory, 1 Tim. 3. 16. All true christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being received up, to be with Christ where he is. And when the time of their being received up is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. He had the joy set before him continually in view, his sufferings were steps to it ; therefore he would not delay his journey. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of our backwardness to do and to suffer for Christ.

When he came to a Samaritan village, the inhabitants refused to receive him, because he was going to Jerusalem to keep one of the feasts. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship—so that the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor they with them, John 4. 9, 20. The disciples did not consider that the conduct of the Samaritans was rather the effect of national prejudices and bigotry, than of enmity to the word and worship of God ; and though they refused to receive Christ and his disciples, they did not ill use or injure them, so that the case was widely different from that of Ahaziah and Elijah. Their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to lead them to think of it. Nor were they aware that the gospel dispensation was to be marked by miracles of mercy. But above all, they were ignorant of the prevailing motives of their own hearts, which were pride and carnal ambition, rather than true zeal for the honour of their Lord. Of this our Lord warned them, that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of, that they should desire to destroy the lives of their enemies rather than to overcome

them with kindness. The gospel was not to be propagated by fire and sword, but by peaceable means. Christ came to earth to slay all enmities, not to foster them. He would not attempt to force his way, but quietly went to another village. When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way, rather than to contend. It is easy for us to say. Come, see our zeal for the Lord ! and to think we are very faithful in his cause, when we are seeking our own objects, and doing harm instead of good to others. Even those who indulge in calumnies or sarcasms against others who differ from them, too plainly show that they know not what manner of spirit they are of. It behoves us to intreat of the Lord, that he would rather rebuke and chasten us, than leave us to indulge such tempers, and act contrary to his precepts and example.

53. Josephus relates an instance of some Samaritans attacking the Gaulleaus on their way to Jerusalem to the feasts.

§ 50. Ver. 57—62. *Every thing to be renounced for Christ.*

We have here an account of three persons who offered to follow Christ, and the answers that he gave to each.

1. Here is one that is forward to follow Christ, but seems to have been hasty and inconsiderate, and not to have counted the cost. He makes Christ a very large promise, as they went in the way, going up to Jerusalem, where it was expected Christ would first appear in his glory. Christ gives him a necessary caution, on the contrary, to count upon poverty and meanness ; for the Son of man has not where to lay his head. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing more than heaven of our religion, while we must resolve not to take up with any thing less. Let us not try to join the profession of christianity with seeking after worldly advantages.

2. Here is another that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs a short delay. To this man Christ first gave the call ; he said to him, Follow me. He that proposed the thing himself, seems to have fled when he heard of the difficulties that attended it ; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, afterward yielded ; so true was that which Christ said, You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, John 15. 16. We may

here see three temptations by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ. We are tempted to rest in a discipleship at large, and not to give up ourselves to be strict and constant. We are tempted to defer the doing of that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off to some other time—when we have got clear of such a care and difficulty, when we have raised an estate to such a pitch, then we will begin to think of being religious. We are tempted to think that our duty to our relations will excuse us from our duty to Christ—let me take care of my family, and provide for my children, and then I will think of serving Christ; whereas the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof must be sought and minded in the first place. Christ would not have his followers or his ministers be unnatural; our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation, to show piety at home, and to requite our parents. But we must not make these an excuse for a neglect of duty to God.

3. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a little time to talk with his friends about it, and to set in order his household affairs, and give direction concerning them. He looked upon his following of Christ as a troublesome, dangerous service, he would therefore take leave of all his friends, expecting never to see them again, or never with any comfort; though, in following Christ, he might be more a comfort and blessing to them. Also he seemed to have worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and he was willing to enter into a temptation leading from his purpose of following Christ. To bid those farewell who were at home at his house, would expose him to the strongest solicitations imaginable to alter his resolution. Those who resolve to walk with their Maker, and to follow their Redeemer, must not parley with the tempter.

None can transact any business in a proper manner if he is attending to other things. No man is fit for the ministry of the gospel, whose eye and heart are fixed on worldly objects. This should be seriously considered by all who intend to engage in that important work, and by all who are already employed in it. He who is called to follow Christ, and to preach his gospel, must not let secular concerns take him from his work. This

applies to the subjects as well as to the ministers of the kingdom of God.

Christ gave him a rebuke for this request; no man designing to make good work of his ploughing, will look behind him; so thou, if thou hast designed to follow me, if thou lookest back to a worldly life again, as Lot's wife did to Sodom, thou art not fit for the kingdom of God. Thou art not soil fit to receive the good seed of the kingdom of God, if thou art thus ploughed by the halves, and not gone through with. Thou art not a sower fit to scatter the good seed of the kingdom, if thou canst hold the plough no better. Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to go on, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back inclines to drawing back, and drawing back is to perdition. He only that endures to the end, shall be saved.

We see that Christ, who was Lord of all, chose for our sakes to live as a stranger, having no property. He forbids not property or possessions, but surely we should learn amidst all to walk, in affection at least, like him, as strangers here, not glued to any thing, using the world as though we used it not. And they that are really thus as he was, what comfort they find! All is sweetened to them, if in their condition they indeed follow him. Hast thou no possession, and but little for present supply? think of the rich inheritance above for all that lay hold on it, and follow Christ by the way.—(88.)

## CHAPTER X.

§ 80. Ver. 1-16. *Seventy disciples sent forth.*

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples to those places which Christ himself designed to visit.

Christ sent them two and two, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. They were ordered to do the same which Christ did wherever he came; 1. They must heal the sick in the name of Jesus, which would make people desire to see him. 2. They must publish the approach of the kingdom of God, even its approach to them. Now is the day of your visitation, know and understand it. It is good to be made sensible of our advantages and opportunities, that we may lay hold upon them. The ministry of the gospel is intended to prepare men to receive Christ as a Prince and a Saviour, and he will surely come in the power of

his Spirit to all places whither he sends his faithful servants,

1. They must set out with prayer, and in prayer they must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God; that he would send them forth as labourers into his harvest, who is the Lord of the harvest. 2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution. 3. They must not incurber themselves, but depend upon God to provide what was convenient for them by their friends. They must go as men in haste, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message. They must go as men of business; business that relates to another world, which they must be intent upon, and therefore must not entangle themselves with secular affairs. 4. They must show God's good-will to all unto whom they come, and leave the issue and success to him who knows the heart. We must earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of those we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer. 5. They must receive the kindnesses of those who entertained them, and welcomed them. 6. They must denounce God's judgments against all who rejected their message.

Upon this occasion, the evangelist records the particular doom of the cities wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done. They enjoyed great privileges, yet they repented not; they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ, to think the better of him, or the worse of sin. They did not bring forth fruits agreeable to the advantages they enjoyed. There was reason to think, morally speaking, that, if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them, and wrought the same miracles among them, they would have repented. To understand the wisdom of God, in giving means of grace to those who would not improve them, and denying them to those who would, we must wait for the great day of discovery. The doom of those who thus receive the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful.

Here is also the general rule which Christ would go by, he will reckon himself treated according as they treated his ministers. Those who despise the faithful ministers of Christ; who, though they do

not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, and look scornfully upon them, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

1. *Fabritius* has given a list of these disciples from ancient traditions; see *Gill*. Mark and Luke are reckoned among the number.

4. The salutations of eastern travellers include a great many inquiries and answers, which consume much time: see 2 Kings 4. 29, for a similar injunction from Elisha to Gehazi when on an errand of importance.

§ 85. Ver. 17-24. *The blessedness of Christ's disciples.*

Our Lord seems not to have expressly promised to the seventy the power to cast out unclean spirits. When they returned they told him of this with joyful surprise, and gave Christ the glory of this. All our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ, and he must have all the praise. They seem to have been lifted up with their success; in his answer he pointed to more valuable blessings to be granted to his disciples. He had seen Satan fall as lightning from heaven; he had been thus cast down when he became an apostate, and his usurped dominion over the earth, and the idolatrous worship he had established, were to be thrown down in the same sudden and surprising manner, by means of the preached gospel. Christ therefore told them that he gave them power to tread on serpents, to prevail against the old serpent and his seed, yet saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts, and are more important than to have all powers, and even success, in spreading the gospel, and yet be ourselves cast-aways. Let us beware especially of spiritual pride, which has been the forerunner of destruction to many.

Our Lord rejoiced with spiritual joy at the prospect of the salvation of many souls. It was fit that particular notice should be taken of that hour, because there were so few such, for he was a man of sorrows; in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. He rejoiced in spirit that it pleased the Father to hide his mysteries from the worldly wise and prudent, and to reveal them to babes. He hath ever resisted the proud, and given grace to the humble. The more simply dependent we are on the teaching, help, and blessing of the Son of God, the more we shall know both of the Father and of the Son; the more

blessed we shall be in seeing the glory and hearing the words of the Divine Saviour; and the more useful we shall be made in promoting his cause.

If God gives his grace, and the knowledge of his Son, to some that are less likely, and doth not give it to others, whom we should think better able to deliver it with advantage; this must satisfy, that so it pleases God, whose thoughts are infinitely above ours.

The honour and happiness of the new testament saints, far exceed those even of the prophets. The general ideas which the old testament saints had, according to the intimations given them, of the graces and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, made them wish that their lot had been reserved for those blessed days, and that they might see the substance of those things which they had faint shadows of. The consideration of the great advantages which we have in the new testament light, above what they had who lived in old testament times, should awaken diligence in the improvement of it; if it do not, it will aggravate our condemnation.

Have we reason to think that our worthless names are written in heaven? Then let us often think of that glorious society among whom we are enrolled, and rejoice in the thought of the privileges which result from such a relation to it, being ever anxious to behave in a manner worthy so illustrious a hope.—(80.)

18. From the highest eminence, power, and glory.

§ 86. Ver. 25-37. *The good Samaritan.*

An interpreter of the law tried to ensnare our Lord, asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as a matter of discourse, especially as matter of dispute, we take the name of God in vain. Christ referred to the law he professed to teach, and allowed that loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, was the sum and substance of the law. Also implying, that if he failed of this obedience he would be condemned by the law as a transgressor. It must be an entire love; God must have our whole souls, and must be served with all that is within us. We must love nothing but what we love for God, and in subordination to him. The lawyer then tried to pass by the law of loving God, and only asked who was his

neighbour. In reply our Lord stated a case, which led him to answer himself.

When the extensive and spiritual requirements of the law are shown, we know that none will be able to perform what it requires, or to claim eternal life on the ground of their obedience. None will ever love God and his neighbour with any measure of pure, spiritual love, who is not made partaker of regenerating grace; the tendency of which is to increase humiliation for sin, and simplicity of dependence on the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus for the gift of eternal life. But the proud heart of man strives hard against these convictions. Leaving out the first and great commandment, men try to justify themselves in respect of the second, which is like unto it, and thus seek to make the commands of God of no effect by their corrupt reasoning.

Christ instanced a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Probably it was matter of fact, and not a parable; and had happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them; they would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and more affecting. This poor man fell among thieves; they were very barbarous; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds.

In this situation he was slighted by those who should have been his friends; who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest, the other a Levite, men of a public character, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion, Heb. 5. 2, who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case, yet they would not themselves do it.

The priest passed by right over against him, and not at some distance off, as some travellers might do, for in such a desert as that tract was, it is not likely there should be any regular road. The Levite did more than the priest. The latter only cast a passing glance, the Levite also went towards him, and looked at him.—(75.)

He was succoured by a stranger, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with. Though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man in misery. He pities him, as he

himself would desire to be pitied in the like case. It is lamentable to observe how selfishness pervades all ranks; how many excuses men will make to avoid trouble or expense in relieving the miseries of others. But the true christian has the law of love written in his heart. The Spirit of Christ dwells in him; Christ's image is renewed in his soul.

The compassion of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion. He went to the poor man; he did all he could to ease the pain, and to prevent the peril of his wounds. He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. When he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. All this was kind and generous, and as much as could have been expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner! The direct scope of this parable is fixed by the context. It is a beautiful illustration of the law of loving our neighbour as ourselves, without regard to nation, party, or any other distinction.

This parable also excellently sets forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward sinful, miserable man. Let us remember that the Son of God came to our relief, when he knew that it would expose him to abasement and suffering. He is thus ever ready to pity and help the poor sinner, when stripped of every plea, wounded in conscience, and without hope of deliverance. We were like this poor, distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin hath done us; we are by nature more than half dead; twice dead in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of that law, looks upon us, but gives us no relief; it passes by, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan, (and they said of him, by way of reproach, He is a Samaritan,) he has compassion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds, Ps. 147. 3; Isa. 61. 1, pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, his own blood; he takes care of us, and bids us to put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this, though he was none

of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, How much we are indebted! and, What shall we render?

Go thou, and do as the Samaritan did, whenever occasion offers; show mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they are not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thine own opinion and communion in religion. The believer considers that Jesus loved him, and bled for him, when an enemy and a rebel; having shown him mercy, he bids him go and do likewise. He will love and do good to his enemies for Christ's sake. It is the duty of us all, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve, all that are in distress, and necessity.

27. *Lightfoot* quotes the words of the Jewish teachers to this purport, Thou shalt love thy neighbour—but they excepted all Gentiles, saying, They are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion. They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his neighbour: indeed they said that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but if they saw a Gentile in danger of death, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to save his life.

30. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is through a mountainous and rocky desert, and at this period was much infested with robbers, so that, as Jerome states, it was called the bloody way. It was much frequented by travellers, on account of its being the high road to Perea, and because classes or stations of priests and Levites were fixed at Jericho as well as Jerusalem. Very few would expose themselves to the additional risk incurred by delaying their journey through such a dangerous country even to assist a friend, much less one whose country was at enmity with their own. The two denarii (about fifteen pence of our money) were then equal to two days' wages of a labourer.

§ 99. Ver. 38—42. *Jesus at the house of Martha and Mary.*

A certain woman, named Martha, received Jesus into her house, and bade him welcome. There were some who were Christ's particular friends, and them he visited most frequently. He loved this family, John 11. 5. Christ's visits are the tokens of his love, John 14. 23.

Our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into Martha's house, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel. A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to their spiritual advantage. Mary sat to hear, which de-

notes close attention. She sat at Christ's feet, as scholars used to do at the feet of their tutors. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive his word, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. If we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

Martha was providing for the entertainment of Christ and those that came with him. Here was a commendable respect to our Lord Jesus; for we have reason to think that it was not for ostentation, but to testify her good will to him. Those who truly love Christ, will think that well bestowed, which is laid out for his honour. Here was a commendable care of her household affairs. But there was something to be blamed. She was for much serving; plenty, variety, and exactness. It does not become the disciples of Christ to seek or provide dainties and superfluities in eating and drinking. What need was there of much serving, when much less would serve? She was cumbered about it, distracted with it. Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be cumbered with them, nor be perplexed by them. She was cumbered about much serving, when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. Worldly business is a snare to us, when it hinders us from serving God, and getting good to our souls.

What needless time is wasted, and expense often incurred, even in the entertainment of ministers and professors of the gospel! Sometimes the persons employed for this, like Martha, lose their temper, break the sabbath, and compel their servants and others, to neglect the duties and privileges of that day.

Martha made complaint to Christ against her sister Mary for not assisting her. This may be considered as a discovery of her worldliness. Undue regard to worldly cares and pursuits, is often the occasion of disturbance in families, and of strife and contention among relations. Those who are eager upon the world themselves, are apt to blame others who are not so; and are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the main chance. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ. We must take heed lest we at any time expect that Christ

should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels.

Though Martha was on this occasion faulty, yet she was a true believer, and in her general conduct she did not neglect the one thing needful. We may therefore suppose that Christ's seasonable reproof had its proper effect. He reproved her that she should think to please him with a splendid entertainment, and for perplexing herself to prepare it for him. It aggravated the sin and folly of her care, that but one thing is needful. This is certainly meant of what Mary made her choice—sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word of salvation. Martha was troubled about many things, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. Martha's work was good in the proper season and place; but now she had something to do unspeakably more needful, therefore it should be most minded. Many things may be needful to the continuance of our lives upon earth, that may not be needful or profitable to our souls. The favour of God is the only thing absolutely needful to our final happiness; the salvation of Christ is absolutely needful to us sinners. Where this is attended to, all other things will be pursued in subservience to it.

Christ declared, Mary hath chosen the good part. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it. For one thing is needful, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ. Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world. She had herein wisely done well for herself. Christ justified Mary. However we may be censured and condemned by men, let us never be discouraged if we are censured for our pious zeal; we have Christ for us. Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. A part with Christ is a good part; it is a part for the soul and eternity. It is a part that shall never be taken away from any that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but nothing shall separate from the love of Christ, and a part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from

us, and God and Christ *will not*. It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this good part, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. Those who choose this good part, not only shall have what they choose, but have their choice commended in the great day.

What numbers are wholly given up unto worldly pursuits and anxieties, to the neglect of their souls; and there are none of us who do not at some time expose ourselves to Christ's rebuke, for our disproportionate anxiety and eagerness about mere trifles, when compared with our attention to the things of eternity. Let us then mind the one thing needful more diligently and entirely. None but Jesus can do wretched sinners good; to hear, believe, and obey his gospel, to have him for our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, comprises all that is necessary for this world and the next; and without this all the rest will leave us miserable.

What Mary heard from those sacred lips we hear still. That heavenly doctrine is ever the same; it is not more subject to change than its great Author. The exercise of the gospel may be taken from us, but the benefit resulting from it is as inseparable from our souls as their being. In the hardest times that shall cleave to us the most closely—and till death, in death, and after death, it shall make us happy.—(34.)

39. This village is by many supposed to have been Bethany, but it rather appears to have been in Galilee: see note, John 11. 1.

## CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 2-4. M. 6. 9-13.  
Ver. 14-23. M. 12. 22-30. Mk. 3. 22-27.  
Ver. 24-36. M. 12. 38-45.

§ 87. Ver. 1-4. *The disciples taught to pray.*

The disciples acknowledge the use and necessity of prayer; without it all religion withers and languishes. The law of God is so pure and exact a rule that we cannot come near its perfection, and therefore fall under its curse. When we so understand it, we are driven to the gospel to seek salvation there. And the articles of the gospel, of our christian faith, are so high and mysterious, that nature cannot rightly understand or believe them; therefore both law and gospel drive us to prayer, to seek of God renewing grace to

conform our hearts in some measure to his holy law; and faith to lay hold on Jesus Christ and his salvation, which is held forth to us in the gospel. Even secret aspirations of the soul to God, which consist with men's callings, exceedingly sweeten and sanctify our other employments, and diffuse somewhat of heaven through all our actions; this were constant walking with Christ all the day, lodging with him at night.—(88.)

It becomes the disciples of Christ, to apply themselves to him as here for instruction in prayer. "Lord, teach us to pray," is itself a good prayer, and a very needful one, for it is Jesus Christ only that can teach us, by his word and Spirit, how to pray. Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; teach me what I shall say.

Their plea is, As John also taught his disciples. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary. According to this sense, Christ taught them a prayer consisting wholly of petitions, even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the Amen, which was usually said in the giving of thanks.

Christ gave them directions; much the same that he had given before in his sermon upon the mount. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, but they are of no moment. One is in the translation, in the third petition; as in heaven, so in earth: but there is a difference in the fourth, in Matthew, Give us daily bread this day; in Luke, Give it us day by day. Thus we may be kept in continual dependence upon God, as children upon their parents.

Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition. In Matthew it is, Forgive us our debts; here it is, Forgive us our sins; which proves that our sins are our debts; not that our forgiving of those who have offended us, can merit pardon from God; he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake; but if God have wrought in us, we may plead that work of his grace, to enforce our petitions for the pardon of our sins. It is, for substance, the same; and we here only gather up some lessons from it.

1. In prayer we ought to come to God as children to a Father, a common Father to all mankind, but in a peculiar manner a Father to all the disciples of Jesus



**Christ.** Let us therefore in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to him with humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

2. At the same time, and in the same petitions wherein we address God for ourselves, we should include all the children of men, as our fellow-creatures.

3. To confirm the habit of heavenly mindedness, we should, in all our devotions, view God as our Father in heaven.

Do you draw near unto God in his Son Christ? Do you give yourselves up to be led by his Spirit? Then you may account and call him your Father. And if you use this word there is abundant sweetness in it, a spring of comfort that cannot run dry. Yea, though we have run astray from Him and forgotten very far the duty of children, yet he cannot forget the love of a Father; so our best way is to return to him. It cannot be well with us so long as we go any where else.—(88.)

4. In prayer, as well as in the tenour of our lives, we must seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, by ascribing honour to his holy name, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world, and that of his grace in the church. May both the one and the other be more manifested, and we and others be more manifestly brought into subjection to both!

5. Those words, As in heaven, so on earth, refer to, all the three first petitions; Father, let thy name be sanctified and glorified, and thy kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth, now alienated from thy service, as it is in heaven, that is, entirely devoted to thy service.

This is the desire of a christian, that his own will may be annihilated, and the will of God placed in its room; that he may have no will but God's; that he may be altogether subject, both to God's commanding and his working will, to do what he commands, and to be heartily content with what he does; for both these are in it. It is safe and comfortable to walk every step by his direction.—(88.)

6. All who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that all other things, so far as to Infinite Wisdom seems good, shall be added to them, and may in faith pray for them.

7. In all our prayers for temporal blessings we must moderate our desires, and confine them to a competency. The ex-

pression here used of "day by day," is the same with "our daily bread."

Though a man has provision by him, not only of a day, but of many years, yet he has need still daily to ask it of God; for it is still in God's hand to give it to him, or not to give, though it is in a man's own hand, in possession.—(88.)

8. Sins are debts which we daily contract, and therefore we should every day pray for their forgiveness. We are not only going behind every day by omissions of duty, and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law by our commissions; every day adds to our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy, that we have so much encouragement given us every day to pray for the pardon of our sins.

9. We have no reason to expect that God will forgive our sins against him, if we do not sincerely, and from a truly christian principle of charity, forgive those who have been injurious to us.

Thou, Lord, requirdest of us to forgive others, and thou workest it in some of us to do so; how much more then may we hope that thou wilt forgive us! If there is any such goodness in us it is from thee, and therefore is infinitely more in thyself as the source of goodness. And let us not think to satisfy God with superficial forgivenesses and reconcilements. Would we be content with such pardon from God, as to have only a present forbearance of his avenging justice? or that he should not quarrel with us, but no further friendship with him? Yet such often are our reconcilements with others.—(88.)

10. Temptations to sin should be as much dreaded and deprecated by us as ruin by sin; and it shall be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us, as to get the guilt of sin removed from us.

11. God is to be wholly depended upon, and sought unto, for our deliverance from all evil; and we should pray, not only that we may not be left to ourselves to run into evil, but that we may not be left to Satan, to bring evil upon us.

Alas, how can this be? might a christian say, looking upon the multitude of temptations without, and of corruptions within himself, and the weakness of the grace he hath. But again, when he looks upward, and lifts his eyes above his difficulties, beholds the strength of God engaged for him, directs his prayers to Him for help, and is assured to find it; this

upholds him, and answers all. There is a roaring lion that seeks to devour, but there is a stronger rescuing Lion, of the tribe of Judah, who will deliver.—(88.)

§ 87. Ver. 5—13. *Christ encourages importunity in prayer.*

Christ encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy in prayer; by showing that importunity will go far in our dealings with men. This is, 1. To direct us in prayer. We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to his neighbour or friend, who he knows is inclined to be kind to him. We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot do without. We must come to him by prayer for others as well as for ourselves. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do what is good. 2. To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man, who was angry at it, much more with God, who is infinitely more ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies. If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

God has promised to give us what we ask of him, ver. 9, 10, either the thing itself you shall ask, or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given. We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen. We must not only ask, but we must continue.

Christ gives us both instruction and encouragement in prayer, from the consideration of our relation to God as a Father. Here is an appeal to the compassion of earthly fathers, and an application of this to the blessings of our heavenly Father. Observe the direction what to pray for; we must ask for the Holy Spirit, not only as necessary in order to our praying well, but as including all the good things we are to pray for; we need no more to make us happy, for the Spirit is the worker of spiritual life, and the earnest of eternal life. The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are all concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for.

And see the encouragement that we shall speed in this prayer; Your heavenly Father will give. It is in his power to

give the Spirit; and, for our comfort, all spiritual blessings are included in that one; it is in his promise; the gift of the Holy Ghost is in the covenant, Acts 2. 33, 38. And it is here inferred from parents' readiness to supply their children's needs, and gratify their desires, when they are natural and proper. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for bread. By this is intimated that this gift is the sum or earnest of all good. For by the influences of the Holy Spirit we are brought to know God and ourselves, to repent, believe in, and love Christ; so are made comfortable in this world, and meet for happiness in the next.

All these blessings our heavenly Father is more ready to bestow on every one that asketh for them, than an indulgent parent to give food to a hungry child. Thus asking, we need no more fear being deluded or overcome by our enemy, than a beloved child need fear lest his father should give him a scorpion instead of an egg. Nay, even this would be more likely, for men are evil, but God is love, and delighteth in mercy.

And this is the excellent advantage of the prayer of faith; that it quiets and establishes the heart in God. Whatsoever is his state and desire, when once the believer has put his petition into God's hand, he rests content in holy security and assurance concerning the answer; refers it to the wisdom and love of God, not doubting but that whatsoever and whensoever it shall be, it will be both gracious and seasonable.—(89.)

6. In the hot weather in the east it is customary to travel at night. Modern travellers have often found that on arriving late at night in a place, all have been retired to rest, but the persons to whom they applied have risen without hesitation, and received them hospitably.

12. There was a sort of scorpion in Judea resembling an egg in appearance.

§ 42. Ver. 14—26. *Christ casts out a devil—The blasphemy of the pharisees.*

Some were affected with this miracle, they admired the power of God, and especially wondered that one who did the work of the Messiah, should have so little of the pomp of the Messiah which they expected. Some challenged him to give a sign from heaven, to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the clouds, such as was upon mount Sinai when the law was given. Others were offended at the miracle, and, to justify their unbelief, suggested that it was by a league with

Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, he did this.

Christ returned a full and direct answer to this cavil. Satan would herein act against himself; and would hasten his own overthrow. He further warned them, that if they were found by these cavils and blasphemies fighting against the kingdom of God, it would come upon them as a victorious force. His casting out of devils was really the destroying of them and their power. Observe here—The heart of every unconverted sinner is the devil's palace, where he resides, and where he rules. The heart is a palace, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the devil's palace. As a strong man armed, he keeps this palace, does all he can to secure it to himself. The prejudices with which he hardens men's hearts against truth and holiness, are the strong-holds he erects for the keeping of his palace. There is a kind of peace in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a strong man armed, keeps it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state, nor any dread of the judgment to come; he flatters himself in his own eyes, and cries peace to himself. Observe the wonderful change that is made in conversion. Satan is a strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, as God, as Mediator. The conversion of a soul to God, is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it and dominion over it. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the eyes opened, the heart humbled and changed, and made serious and spiritual, then Satan's armour is taken away. He divides the spoils; all the endowments of mind or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him.

From thence Christ infers, that, seeing the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him, to follow his guidance, and receive his gospel, otherwise they would justly be reckoned as siding with the enemy.

Christ represents the state of those who relapse into a state of subjection to Satan.

Here we have the condition of a formal hypocrite. The unclean spirit is gone out, so that the man seems not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so followed with his temptations. The house is swept from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's; by a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's; or by a partial reformation, as Herod's. The house is swept, but it is not washed, not sanctified. Christ said, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me; the house must be washed, or it is none of his. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that besets the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched. It is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, Matt. 23. 25. It is swept, but the leprosy is in the wall, and will be there till something more is done. The house is garnished with common gifts and graces. It is not furnished with any true grace; it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is garnished, but the property is not altered; it was never surrendered to Christ, nor inhabited by the Spirit. Let us therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short.

Here is the condition of a final apostate, into whom the devil returns after he had gone out. The wicked spirits enter in without any difficulty or opposition, they are welcomed, and they dwell there, there they work, there they rule; the last state of that man is worse than the first. Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, it will not long be steadfast; where secret haunts of sin are kept up under the cloak of profession, the close hypocrite commonly proves an open apostate. The last state of such is worse than the first, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostates are usually the worst of men, and their sins of all others the most aggravated. God often sets marks of his displeasure upon them in this world, and in the other world they will receive the greater damnation. From such an awful state let all earnestly pray to be delivered.

#### § 44. Ver. 27, 28. *True happiness.*

Here is the applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his ex-

cellent discourses. While the scribes and pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake. To all who believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an Honour, 1 Pet. 2. 7. Yet we must be careful, lest we too much magnify the honour of his natural kindred.

Christ took occasion from thence to pronounce those more happy who are his faithful and obedient followers, than she was who bare and nursed him. He leads the woman to a higher consideration, one which more concerned her. Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it, and keep it; that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

§ 43. Ver. 29—36. *Christ reproves the Jews.*

Christ promised that there should be one sign more given, different from any that had yet been given them, even the sign of Jonas the prophet, which in Matthew is explained, as meaning the resurrection of Christ; and he warned them to improve this sign. The queen of Sheba gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel. She came from far to hear his wisdom, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here; and yet these wretched Jews give no regard to what Christ saith, though he is in the midst of them! The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impiteness. Christ's preaching far exceeds that of Jonah; is more powerful and awakening, and threatens much sorer ruin than that of Nineveh, yet none are startled to turn from their evil way, as the Ninevites did.

He shows what is the sign which God expects from us, for the evidencing our faith; and that is, the serious practice of the religion we profess to believe, and readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought in their proper evidence.

They had the light, with all the advantage they could desire. Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature. Having the light, their concern was, to have sight; or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the object ever

so clear, if the eye be not right, we are not the better. The light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as the light of Divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it, it is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. If the soul aims at truth, and, without by-ends, receives and entertains the gospel, all its powers and faculties being subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, then the whole soul shall be full of light, full of holiness and comfort; it was darkness itself, but is now light in the Lord. The inference from hence therefore is, Take heed, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in inquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light, love, and power of it; not as the generation whom Christ preached to, who never sincerely desired to know God's will, nor designed to do it, therefore walked on in darkness, and perished eternally.

Though Christ himself were the constant preacher in any congregation, and worked miracles daily among them, yet unless his grace humbled their hearts, and subdued their prejudices, they would not profit by his word. Instead therefore of wanting more evidence and fuller instruction than the Lord is pleased to afford us, we should pray without ceasing that our hearts and understandings may be opened, that we may profit by the light we enjoy, and especially take heed that the light which is in us be not darkness; for if our leading principles be wrong, our judgment and practice must become more so.

§ 46. Ver. 37—54. *Christ reproves the pharisees.*

We know not the mind of this pharisee; but, whatever it was, Christ knew it. The pharisees took offence at Christ for not washing before meat. They gravely marvelled that Jesus washed not his hands before dinner, yet attempted not to cleanse their own hands from wickedness. Christ would not do it, because he would witness against their assuming power to impose that as a matter of religion which God commanded them not. He reproved the pharisees for placing religion so much in those instances of it which are only outward, and fall under the eye of man; while those were not only postponed, but

quite expunged, which respect the soul, and fall under the eye of God. Did not God, who made laws for that which is without, even in those laws further intend something within, and by other laws show how little he regarded the purifying of the flesh, and the putting away of the filth of that, if the heart be not made clean? Ver. 41 implies that charity to the poor, from proper principles, as the fruit of repentance, faith, and love to God, will do more to sanctify our possessions and enjoyments than outward ceremonies.

He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles. By this they wished to gain reputation as strict observers of the law. Christ does not condemn them for being so exact, but for thinking that this would atone for the neglect of greater duties. We should all look well to our own hearts, that they may be cleansed and new created; and while we attend to the great things of the law and of the gospel, we must be careful not to neglect the small-est matter God has appointed.

He reproves them for their pride and vanity, and affectation of precedency and praise of men. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences.

He also bore testimony against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to expound the law according to the tradition of the elders. They seemed very strict for the observance of the law, but their practices broke the law. They would come with both hands, to dispense with a command of God, but not with a finger to mitigate the rigour of the traditions of the elders.

These hypocrites, among other pretences of piety, built the sepulchres of the prophets. Yet they had inveterate enmity to those in their own day; and would slay and persecute the prophets and apostles sent unto them. Those prophets should prove themselves apostles, or messengers sent from heaven, by signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Therefore God will justly put another construction upon their building the tombs of the prophets, than what they would be thought to intend; it shall be interpreted as their allowing the deeds of their fathers. They must expect to be reckoned with, as fillers up of the measure of persecution. All shall be required of this last generation of the Jews, whose sin in persecuting

Christ's apostles would bring wrath upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Their destruction by the Romans was so terrible, that it might well be reckoned the completing of God's vengeance.

They themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ, though by their acquaintance with the Old Testament they could not but know that the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God was at hand. They saw the prophecies accomplished in that kingdom which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet would not themselves enter into it. Nay, they did all they could to hinder and discourage those who were entering in.

We are told how maliciously the scribes and pharisees sought to draw Christ into a snare. Faithful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies. The prophet complains of those who make a man an offender for a word, Isa. 29. 21. Let us consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.

When any lie in wait to catch something out of our mouth, that they may ensnare us, give us thy prudence and thy patience, O Lord, that we may not give occasion to those who seek occasion against us, and disappoint them of their purposes. Furnish us with such meekness and patience that we may glory in reproaches, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, and that thy Holy Spirit may rest upon us.—(73.)

41. A person was accounted unclean who had passed over a grave.

## CHAPTER XII.

§ 47. Ver. 1—12. *Christ reproves the interpreters of the law.*

The more the pharisees strove to drive the people from Christ, the more they flocked to him. It is a good sight to see people forward to hear the word, and venturing upon inconvenience and danger, rather than miss an opportunity.

Christ began with a caution against hypocrisy. He said this to the disciples, in the hearing of this great multitude, rather than privately, to show that he would not countenance hypocrisy in his own disciples. Observe the description of that sin which he warns them against; it is leaven, it is spreading as leaven, insinuates itself into the whole man, and all that he does; puffs men up with pride, imbitters them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God. It is the

leaven of the pharisees; take heed of imitating them; be not of their spirit. It is to no purpose to dissemble, truth will come out; a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Christ added a charge to them, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them. But it assuredly would be a suffering cause, though never a sinking one; let them arm themselves with a holy resolution in their work. Consider the power of your enemies is a limited power. God is to be feared more than the most powerful men. The lives of christians and good ministers are the particular care of the Divine providence. In times of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles; and a firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and the extent of it, would satisfy us when in peril, and encourage us to trust God in the way of duty. Providence takes cognizance of the meanest creatures; even of the sparrows, and therefore of the smallest interest of the disciples of Christ.

To engage us to confess Christ before men, how dear soever it may cost us, we are assured that they who confess Christ now, shall be owned by him in the great day before the angels of God. To deter us from denying Christ, and cowardly deserting his truths and ways, we are here assured that those who deny Christ, whatever they may save by it, though life itself, and whatever they may gain by it, though a kingdom, will be vast losers at last; for Christ will not know them, will not own them, nor show them favour.

The errand they were shortly to be sent upon, was of the highest importance to the children of men. Let them be hold in preaching the gospel, for a sorer and heavier doom would attend those who rejected them, than those who now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him. Who-soever shall speak a word against the Son of man, shall stumble at the meanness of his appearance, and speak slightly of him, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But him that blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, that blasphemeth the christian doctrine, and maliciously opposes it, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and his attestation of Christ's being glorified, Acts 2. 33; 5. 32, shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel.

Whatever trials they should be called to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honourably brought through

them. Do not study by what art or rhetoric to soften your judges; if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually. Do not perplex yourselves, for the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of wisdom, shall teach you what ye ought to say, and how to say it, for the honour of God and his cause.

Let us then boldly confess Christ before men, in joyful and assured hope of being acknowledged by him, for they who trust in him shall never be confounded. And let no trembling penitent backslider, who in an unguarded hour hath spoken a word against the Son of man, doubt of obtaining forgiveness. This is far different from the determined enmity that dictates the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven, because it will never be repented of.

1. Or, he began to say unto his disciples, "Above all things beware," &c.

§ 47. Ver. 13—21. *A caution against covetousness—The parable of the rich man.*

We have here an application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother, in a matter concerning the family estate. If he had desired Christ to assist his pursuit of the heavenly inheritance, he would have given him help; but as to this he has nothing to do.

Now this shows us that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. Christianity does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, but worldly dominion is not founded in grace. It does not encourage expectations of worldly advantages by religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects therefore that Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. It does not encourage being rigorous in our demands, but rather, for peace-sake, to recede from our right. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life.

Christ took occasion from hence to give a necessary caution to his hearers. Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against; for our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world. The life of the soul, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it; and

the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor satisfy its desires. Nay, even the life of the body and the happiness of that, do not consist in an abundance of these things. This is illustrated by a parable, which shows the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die. It gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man, though he is not stated to have got his wealth by fraud or oppression, or to have been a miser. The character drawn is exactly that of a prudent, worldly man, who has no grateful regard to the providence of God, nor any right thought of the uncertainty of human affairs, the worth of his soul, or the importance of eternity. How many, even among professing christians, point out similar characters, as models for imitation, and proper persons to form connexions with! We are here told what this man thought within himself. God is both a Discerner and a Judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid, and thoughts are free.

When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity of doing more good, he afflicts himself. He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it.

His projects and purposes were the result of his cares, and absurd and foolish like them. It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns; the building of them would but increase his care. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow. His folly also appears as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it. To count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of wealth, was folly, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of the greatest abundance. It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to indulge

the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetites, without any thought of doing good to others.

Here is God's sentence upon him; and we are sure that His judgment is according to truth. Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. God said it to him, let him know it either by his conscience or by some awakening providence. This was said when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances. Observe the character God gave him, "Thou fool." Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, and they will call themselves so. His life is vanity and vexation, while the poor believer is wise and happy.

God passed upon him a sentence of death. He thought he had goods that should be his for many years, but he must part from them this night! The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself, and terrible to them. Thy soul shall be required! this intimates that he is loth to part with it. God shall require it, shall require an account of it, require it as a guilty soul to be punished. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. It is this night, this present night, without delay. Then whose shall those things be? Not thine to be sure.

Carnal worldlings are fools while they live; this their way is their folly, Ps. 49. 13, but their folly is made most evident when they die. At his end he shall be a fool, Jer. 17. 11, for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to. It was his error that he made it his business to lay up for the flesh; which he calls laying up for himself. It is his error that he counts those things his treasure, which are thus laid up for the world, and the body, and the life that now is. The greatest error of all is, that he is in no care to be rich toward God, rich in faith, Jam. 2. 5, rich in good works, in the fruits of righteousness, 1 Tim. 6. 18, rich in graces and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls.

Observe the folly and misery of a worldly man; So is he. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. It is the unspeakable folly of most

men, to mind and pursue that which is for the body and for time only, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

What does it avail a man to have it known how many thousands he died possessed of? As every one who layeth up treasure for himself is thus foolish, guilty, and miserable, let us seek true riches, that we may be approved of God as wise men, and made happy in his favour.

21. "With respect to God"—there is a force in the original which our language will not exactly express. It represents God as a depository in whose hands the believer has lodged his treasure, and that he has, as it were, made himself accountable for it in another and a better world.—*Doddridge*.

§ 47. Ver. 22—40. *Worldly care reproved.*

Our Lord Jesus here inculcates some needful, useful lessons. He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting, perplexing cares, about the necessary supports of life. This caution he had largely insisted upon, Matt. 6. 25, &c. And the arguments here used are much the same, designed for our encouragement to cast our care upon God, which is the right way to ease ourselves of it.

Consider then, that God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the less. God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for his spiritual Israel; but then let them not be of little faith. A powerful, practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, will be mighty to the removing of disquieting, perplexing imaginations. Our cares are fruitless and vain, therefore it is folly to indulge them; they will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose. Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch; can add to his age one year, or one hour? It is necessary that we refer ourselves wholly to the providence of God. As in our stature, so in our state, it is our wisdom to take it as it is. An eager, anxious pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ.

Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy. They have better things to mind and pursue. Mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs. They have better things to expect and

hope for; Fear not, little flock. It is necessary that fears should be suppressed; when we frighten ourselves with apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon needless cares how to avoid it.

Christ's disciples are a small flock of harmless, defenceless sheep, in the midst of this wicked world; but they are dear to Him who hath purchased them, and hath brought them back to his fold. And as their Father intends to give them the kingdom of heavenly glory and happiness, and greatly delights in doing this, they may cast all their cares upon him. Instead of burdening themselves with unceasing endeavours to accumulate more and more wealth, they should be ready, when proper occasions require, to part with what they have. Thus they would be secure from putting their money into a bag with holes, Hag. 1. 6, or one liable to wear out, (an apt emblem of the uncertainty of all earthly possessions,) for thus their treasure would be laid up in heaven. If we value the beauty of holiness, we shall not crave the luxuries of life. Let us then examine whether we belong to this little flock. Let us also keep close under our Shepherd's care, and in the path of duty; and let us be thankful that it was not the Lord's good pleasure to give us worldly treasures, and to leave us destitute of his grace.

He charges them to get ready, and to keep in readiness for Christ's coming; when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven, shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, ver. 35, &c. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants; not only working servants, but waiting servants. We must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him. In this simile Christ alluded to his own ascension to heaven, his coming to call his people to him by death, and his return to judge the world, for which the disciples were continually to hold themselves in readiness. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master's glorious appearing, and doing every thing with regard to that, and in order to that. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be in the night, it will be far in the night, when he has long deferred his coming, and when many have done looking for him. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise. This speaks not



only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are altogether regardless of the notices given them. That which he expects and requires from his servants is, that they be ready to open to him immediately, whenever he comes; that they be found as his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their loins girded about; alluding to servants ready to go and do as their master bids them, having their long garments girded up, which otherwise would hinder them, and their lights burning, with which to light their master. Those servants will be happy, who are found ready when their Lord comes. To wait upon their servants is not the manner of men; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as one that served. It signifies the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before to prepare for them.

We are kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of His coming, that we may be always ready. If the good man of the house had notice of his danger of being robbed on such a night, he would have staid up, and saved his house; we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming as a thief in the night, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus watch. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls; be ye therefore ready also, as ready as the good man of the house would be, if he knew what hour the thief would come.

35. The long flowing robes of the east required to be girded up, when the wearer engages in any active service.

§ 47. Ver. 41—53. *Watchfulness enforced.*

In answer to Peter's inquiry whether they only, or all his disciples were concerned in these exhortations, promises, and warnings, our Lord intimated that others also were included. We are all to take to ourselves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to inquire accordingly concerning it, *Speakest thou this to us? To me? Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* Doth this word belong to me? Speak it to my heart. His professed disciples also would not only be severely punished for such conduct as he here mentioned, but also for neglecting or improperly performing their work. This would be regulated according to the degree of information afforded them. It may

be considered as the general rule of God's dealings with all his rational creatures. None is left in such absolute ignorance as not to know many things to be wrong which he does, and many things to be right which he neglects, therefore all are inexcusable in their sin. Our looking upon Christ's second coming as being at a distance, causes irregularities which render the thought of it terrible. The servant saith in his heart, *My Lord delays his coming.* Christ's patience is very often misinterpreted as delay. Death and judgment will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers. Happy then is that faithful and wise servant who delights in his work, and gives himself continually to it. May the Lord give us grace to improve our many advantages to the glory of his name!

Our Lord next said that he was come to send fire on earth. The introduction of the gospel dispensation would occasion many desolations. Not that this would be the tendency of Christ's religion, which is pure, peaceable, and loving, but the effect of the opposition raised against it, by its being contrary to men's pride and lusts. This would diffuse manifold evils over the earth. Infidels have adduced these effects of christianity as arguments against its Divine origin. But the prediction of these effects, which no superficial observer could have expected from so benign a religion, is additional proof that it is from God. Every one truly acquainted with the human heart will readily account for these things without charging them on the gospel. They are, in fact, occasioned by its excellency, and must follow from it while men continue so proud, carnal, selfish, and at enmity with God, as they are by nature.

Christ added, *What will I, if it be already kindled?* This seems to refer to the opposition of the scribes and pharisees. Did they suppose he was disappointed, or that he meant to desist? On the contrary, he desired the more extensive publication of the gospel. But before that took place he had a baptism to be baptized with, far different from that of water and the Holy Spirit, by which he had been admitted to his prophetic office. He must endure extreme sufferings and death, before he could possess the mediatorial throne. Till this was accomplished he was straitened. It consisted not with his plan to preach the gospel

more extensively till this baptism was completed.

Nor should we be troubled at the effects of the preaching the gospel, or the abuses of it. We should be zealous in promoting the truth, for though divisions will be excited, and a man's own household be his foes, yet sinners will be converted, and God will be glorified. Even among those who receive the gospel, there are different sentiments in lesser things, which occasion divisions; and Christ permits it for holy ends, 1 Cor. 11. 19, that christians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, Rom. 14. 1, 2.

42 It was usual to portion out to every member of a family his allowance of food. This was the custom formerly in our own land. See the Northumberland house-book for curious details respecting these portions in a family of rank.

§ 47. Ver. 54—59. *A warning to improve opportunities, and to be reconciled to God.*

Christ would have the people to be as wise in the concerns of their souls as they are in their outward affairs.

1. Let them learn to discern the way of God toward them, that they may prepare accordingly. Men had learned by observation in that country when to expect a shower, and when to look for heat. In such matters they were wise; but the exact fulfilling of types and prophecies in the doctrine, miracles, and character of Christ, and in the time and circumstances of his appearing, did not convince them that he was the promised Messiah! In this their hypocritical teachers were most faulty; yet, as the case was so very evident, why did not the people judge what was right in that matter? This seems to be the meaning of the question, which probably was addressed to the multitude, as what went before was intended for the scribes and pharisees.

2. Let them hasten to obtain peace with God before it is too late; see Matt. 5. 26. The passage, as it is here connected, implied a warning to the Jewish nation to cease from their opposition to Christ, and to welcome him as their Prince and Saviour before it was too late. But it is applicable to all: if any man has found out that God has a controversy with him concerning his sins, let him, without delay, apply to him as God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; for if death come before this, his soul will be cast into the prison of hell; and as he never will be able to pay his mighty

debt, so he must abide in that place of torment to all eternity.

Then let us give diligence to be delivered out of the hands of God as an Adversary, into his hands as a Father, and this while we are in the way, which has the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are alive, we are in the way, and now is our time. Let us take hold on the arm of the Lord, stretched out in this gracious offer, that He may make peace, and He shall make peace, Isa. 27. 4, 5; for we cannot walk together till we be agreed.

54. Our Lord here refers to "the cloud." In those countries a small cloud frequently rises, as 1 Kings 18. 44. which is the sure forerunner of a storm or heavy rain.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 18—21. M. 13. 31—33. Mk. 4. 30—32.

§ 48. Ver. 1—5. *Christ exhorts to repentance from the case of the Galileans and others.*

Mention was made to Christ of the death of some Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. This tragical story is briefly related here, and is not met with in any historians.

In Christ's reply to this, he adverted to another event, which, like it, gave an instance of people who were taken away by sudden death. It was not long since the tower in Siloam fell, and eighteen persons were killed and buried in the ruins of it. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove to be men's destruction. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and such like events, nor from thence to censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners. Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those who are afflicted more than their neighbours, lest we add sorrow to the sorrowful. We have enough to do to judge ourselves. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by. As no place or employment can secure us from the stroke of death, we should always be prepared for it, and consider the sudden or extraordinary removal of others as warnings to ourselves.

On these accounts Christ founded a call to repentance. This intimates that we all deserve to perish as much as they did; and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the iniquity of our

holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. We are all concerned to repent, and the judgments of God upon others, are loud calls to us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing that great duty which he came to enjoin upon us—and that is, to repent. If we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that bids us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent, for otherwise we shall perish; so that he hath set before us life and death, good and evil.

1. Much difference of opinion exists as to the historical fact here adverted to, and it is of no importance, excepting as an object of speculative inquiry. It will be sufficient to state the view taken by *Greswell*, who is among the most recent that have considered the subject. He apprehends, 1. That some disturbance had taken place, partly in the temple at Jerusalem, between the Roman soldiers and the Jews, attended with bloodshed. 2. That this was the sedition of Barabbas. 3. That some of Herod's native subjects, the Galileans, had suffered, perhaps innocently, while in the act of sacrificing. 4. That this violence caused the enmity between Herod and Pilate, and was the reason why the former was present at Jerusalem at the passover when Christ suffered, with an armed force, for the protection of his subjects. 5. That this was a recent event, after the commencement of our Lord's final circuit, and before its close. It may be observed that *Josephus* is silent generally as to the events of Pilate's administration, except after the close of our Lord's history, and if the sedition was connected with Barabbas, who also was connected so intimately with the history of Christ, it accounts for his silence respecting the sedition. See also Pilate's question to our Lord, ch. 23. 6. The difference between Herod and Pilate is also attributed to an interference of the latter with the religious feelings of the Jews, by dedicating some golden shields to Tiberius. *Josephus* mentions that tumults often took place in the temple during the festivals, and that on one occasion Archelaus put three hundred Galileans to death in the temple.

4. The tower in, or rather, by Siloam, is thought to have been one of the towers on the city walls.

#### 43. Ver. 6—9. Parable of the barren fig-tree.

This parable of the barren fig-tree is intended to enforce the warning immediately before. Except ye be reformed, ye will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down.

This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him

above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them; but they were a reproach, instead of a credit to their profession; upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off. Yet they were to be spared a little longer, that the apostles and ministers of the gospel might make them one more call to faith and holiness. But the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful; and ruin without remedy came upon them about forty years after.

Yet there is, without doubt, a further reference designed for awakening all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church. Those who continue unfruitful under the means of grace, though spared from time to time, through the long-suffering of the Lord, will at length be cut down by death and cast into hell, except they repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. It behoves us, then, to inquire how long we have been favoured with the means of grace, and borne with by the long-suffering of God—to examine whether we bear fruit to his glory, and the good of men, or are still cumbering the ground.

Christ seems to be intended as the owner of the vineyard who sentences the barren trees to be cut down, and the language used may be intended to describe the prayers and labours of faithful ministers who earnestly desire to prevent the ruin of their hearers. Reprieves of mercy are but for a time. Let it alone this year also, a short time, but sufficient to make trial. When God has borne long, we may hope that he will bear with us yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always.

7. Three years, at which time from the period of fruit bearing, the naturalists tell us, those fig-trees that bear at all will produce fruit.

#### § 88. Ver. 10—17. The infirm woman strengthened.

Our Lord Jesus spent his sabbaths in public worship. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity. He wrought a miracle of mercy to confirm the doctrine he preached. A woman in the synagogue had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, so that she was bowed together. Observe, though she was under this infirmity, by which she was much deformed, and made to look mean, and probably motion was very painful to her, yet she went to the synagogue on the sabbath-day. Even bodily infirmi-

ties, unless they are very grievous indeed, should not keep us from public worship on sabbath-days. She came to Christ to be taught, and to get good to her soul, and then he gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Those whose chief care is for their souls, best befriend the true interests of their bodies. Let not those despair, whose disease is inveterate, who have been long in affliction. God can at length relieve them. Though she was under the power of a spirit of infirmity, an evil spirit, Christ has a power superior to that of Satan. Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself.

This cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the soul. 1. In the conversion of sinners. Unsanctified hearts are under this spirit of infirmity, the faculties of the soul are bowed down toward things below. They can in no wise lift up themselves to God and heaven; the bent of the soul, in its natural state, is quite the contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ; but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he looses them from their infirmity, makes the soul straight, reduces it to order, raises it above worldly regards, and directs its affections heavenward. 2. In the consolation of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a spirit of infirmity, a spirit of bondage; through prevailing grief and fear, their souls are cast down and disquieted within them; they are troubled, they are bowed down greatly, they go mourning all the day long, Ps. 38. 6. But Christ, by his Spirit of adoption, looses them from this infirmity, and raises them up. When crooked souls are made straight, they will show it by glorifying God.

The ruler of the synagogue had indignation at it, because it was on the sabbath-day. What light can shine so clear, so strong, which a spirit of bigotry, and enmity to Christ and his gospel, will not shut men's eyes against? See here how light he made of Christ's miracles. See also how he stretches the law beyond its intention, in making either healing or being healed to be work forbidden on the sabbath-day. Those who hate the gospel and its blessed effects, will always find some objection against every instance of Divine grace.

Christ knew that this ruler had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, and that

he did but cloak it with a pretended ass for the sabbath-day; he really would not have them be healed any day. Christ appeals to the common practice among the Jews, and applies it to the present case. Must an ox or an ass have compassion on the sabbath-day, to be loosed from the stall, and shall not this poor woman be loosed? She is a daughter of Abraham, therefore entitled unto the Messiah's blessings, to the bread which belongs to the children. She is one whom Satan has bound, therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of piety to God, to break the power of the devil. She has been in this deplorable condition these eighteen years, and now that there is an opportunity of delivering her, it ought not to be deferred a day longer.

They were silenced, yet it was not shame that worked repentance. What confirmation this was to the faith of the people, who rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him! Every thing that is to the honour of Christ, is the comfort of true christians.

Satan has bound our souls with the chain of his sinful propensities, so that we are not able to liberate ourselves; but if Jesus speaks the word, and puts forth his healing power, sinners are released. This deliverance is most frequently wrought upon the Lord's day, and whatever labour tends to put men in the way of receiving the blessing, accords with the design of that day of sacred rest.

§ 88. Ver. 18—22. *The parables of the mustard seed, and leaven.*

Here is the progress of the gospel foretold in two parables, which are in Matt. 13. 31, 33. The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of God. 1. You expect it will suddenly arrive at perfection; but it is like a grain of mustard-seed, little, and promises but little; yet, when sown in soil proper to receive it, it waxes a great tree. 2. You expect it will make its way by outward means, but it shall work like leaven, silently and insensibly, without any force or violence, ver. 21. In this it triumphs, but the savour of the knowledge of it is made manifest in every place. But we must wait for the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world.

May the gracious principle grow in our hearts; may our faith and love grow exceedingly, so as to give undoubted evidence of their reality. May the example

of God's saints be blessed to those among whom they live ; may his grace flow from heart to heart, until the little one becomes a thousand.—(83.)

Christ's progress toward Jerusalem is recorded. He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying. Here we find Christ an itinerant preacher. Wherever providence brings us, we should endeavour to do all the good we can.

§ 80. Ver. 23—30. *Exhortation to enter at the strait gate.*

Our Saviour came to guide men's consciences, not to gratify their curiosity. Ask not, How many shall be saved ? But, Shall I be one of them ? Not. What shall become of such and such, and, what shall this man do ? But, What shall I do, and what will become of me ? In Christ's answer observe a quickening exhortation and direction ; Strive to enter in at the strait gate. This is directed to all, to each of us ; it is, Strive ye. All that will be saved, must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man. Those that would enter in, must strive to enter. We must strive with God in prayer, strive against sin and Satan ; we must strive in every duty of religion, strive with our whole hearts. Be in an agony, strive as those that run for a prize, excite and exert yourselves to the utmost. Here are divers awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them ! They answer the question, Are there few that shall be saved ?

Christ solemnly assured them that many would seek to enter in, and should not be able. Some seek admission to eternal happiness, without conversion or faith in the Saviour. Others seek these blessings in a slothful manner, or in the use of means God never appointed. Others with reserves for their worldly interests or pleasures. In such, or other ways, many come short of salvation. But it is by delays especially, that men seek to enter in and are not able. They do not begin to seek in good earnest till it is too late. While life lasts, the Master of the house, the Lord Jesus, sits as it were at mercy's gate, over which it is written, Knock, and it shall be opened to you ; but at length he rises up and bars the door. Many, even of those who then heard Christ, first began to knock at the gate, and to seek salvation when too late.

Many are ruined by an ill-grounded

hope of heaven, which they never dis-trusted or called in question, and conclude their state is good, because they never doubted it. Their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ discards them ; Depart from me. It is the principal part of the misery of the damned. The anguish and misery of such will be increased by be-holding the happiness of the patriarchs and prophets, and even of vast numbers of the Gentiles, saved by faith and repent-ance in Christ, while they have perished through unbelief : thus the first would be last, and the last first.

Let us strive to enter at the strait gate, and continue to labour and to wrestle. How dreadful will be the disappointment of those who hoped and intended some time to enter, but, from carnal motives, deferred till it became too late, and the door was for ever shut against them ! But let none yield to despondence, either with respect to themselves or others, for behold there are last who shall be first, and first who shall be last. If we come to heaven, we shall meet many there whom we little thought to meet, and miss a great many whom we expected to find.

§ 80. Ver. 31—35. *Christ's reproof to Herod, and to the people of Jerusalem.*

Certain of the pharisees came to Christ, pretending a concern for his safety. Christ, in calling Herod a fox, gave him his true character. The greatest of men were accountable to Him, therefore it be-came him to call this proud king by his own name ; but it is not an example for us. I know, said our Lord, that I must die ; I expect it, and count upon it, the third day, that is, very shortly ; my hour is at hand. To make death familiar to us will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death. When I die, I shall be per-fected, I shall have completed my under-taking—I shall be consecrated. It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but little, that we may thereby be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, that our enemies have no power to take us off, so long as God has any work for us to do. I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction.

Here is Christ's deep lamentation for

Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city. That city had, as it were, an exclusive claim to the guilt of murdering the prophets, but this sentence must not be taken to say that none perish elsewhere. The wickedness of persons and places which more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God, in particular provokes and grieves the Lord Jesus. Those who enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. Jesus Christ has showed himself freely willing to receive and entertain poor souls, that come to him with care and tenderness! Sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, because they will not. Christ's willingness leaves their blood upon their own heads. The house that Christ leaves, is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though much frequented, is desolate, if Christ has deserted it. He justly withdraws from those who drive him from them. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers who will not now be convinced; but let us shun this rock, and learn thankfully to welcome, and to profit by all those who come in the name of the Lord, to invite us to partake of his great salvation.

31. Our Lord was then in Perna, a country beyond Jordan, in the government of Herod, who probably sent this threat, wishing to drive Jesus away.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

§ 90. Ver. 1—6. *Christ heals a dropsical man on the sabbath.*

This pharisee, as well as others, seems to have had an ill design in entertaining Jesus at his house. But our Lord would not be hindered from healing a man, who probably presented himself before him hoping for a cure, though he knew the clamours they would raise at his doing it on the sabbath. When they refused to answer his questions respecting the lawfulness of this, he healed the man, and silenced their objections, by showing them that pity for an animal, or regard for their own property, would have caused them more labour than that for which they blamed him.

It requires particular instruction to bring men to understand the proper connexion between piety and charity in observing the sabbath, and the distinction between

works of real necessity and habits of self-indulgence. Wisdom from above, teaches patient perseverance in well doing, amidst malicious and watchful opposers.

1. The Jews not only prepared the best food they could procure for the sabbath-day, but in later times had even sabbath *feasts* open to strangers. Such a one seems here described, and this appears to explain ver. 12—14.

§ 90. Ver. 7—14. *Christ teaches humility.*

Our Lord Jesus gives here a lesson of humility. He observed how these lawyers and pharisees sought for the highest seats. Even in the common actions of life, Christ marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables. He observed how those who thus aspired often exposed themselves, and were disgraced; while those who, when they come in, content themselves with the lowest places, are likely to be preferred. He applied this generally, and would have all learn not to mind high things, for pride and ambition are disgraceful before men; but humility and self-denial are really honourable. We see in other instances, that a man's pride will bring him low, and before honour is humility.

He reproved the master of the feast for having so many rich people, when he should rather have invited the poor, or have sent portions to those for whom nothing was prepared. Our Saviour here teaches, that works of charity are better than works of magnificence. Say not that thou art a loser, because they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God does not pay the best men in those things.

Our Lord certainly did not mean that a proud and unbelieving liberality should be recompensed, but that his precept of benefiting the poor and afflicted should be observed from love to him. And let us consider the example of Christ as a comment on this precept. He has made a rich provision of holy consolations and lasting happiness, by making himself poor, and dying on the cross for our sins. But the poor in spirit, the broken-hearted sinner alone, will enjoy this, as Christ proceeds to show.

8, 10. The highest importance is even now in the east attached to occupying honourable places at an entertainment, and magnificent feasts are still given at marriages.

14. The exclusive mention in this place of

rewards to the righteous, does not in the least imply that the wicked shall not receive *their* reward, which is so clearly stated elsewhere.

§ 90. Ver. 15—24. *Parable of the great supper.*

It will be good for us, when receiving the gifts of God's providence, to pass to the consideration of the gifts of his grace, those better things. This thought will be very seasonable when we are partaking of bodily refreshments. Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Here is an allusion to the satisfaction to be enjoyed in the days of the Messiah. The speaker seems to have had carnal views of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. Our Lord therefore, by a parable, showed him how ill suited these pleasures were to the Jews in general, and described their present and future conduct respecting his gospel.

In the parable we may observe,

1. The free grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ. There is that in Christ and the grace of the gospel, which will be food and a feast for the soul of man that knows its own capacities, for the soul of a sinner that knows its own necessities and miseries. Here is a general invitation given; he bade many. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake the benefits of his gospel. There is provision for as many as come. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel church planted, those who before were invited, were more closely pressed to come in without delay. Now all things are ready, the full discovery of the gospel mystery is now made, and the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the call now given to us; All things are now ready, now is the accepted time, it is now, and has not been long; it is now, and will not be long; it is a season of grace that will be soon over; and therefore come now; do not delay; accept the invitation.

2. The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. One would have expected that the invited guests should all with one consent have come. Yet all found out some pretence to put off their attendance. This speaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to accept the offers of Christ's grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It shows also the backwardness there is to close with the gospel call. They cannot for shame avow their refusal, but desire to be excused.

Here were two that were purchasers, who were in such haste to go and see their purchases, that they could not find time to go to the supper. This intimates inordinate concern about the world, which keeps people from Christ and his grace; preference given to the things of time above those of eternity. It is hard so to manage worldly affairs, that they may not divert us from spiritual pursuits; but this ought to be our great care. Here was one that was newly married. Our affection to our relations often proves a hinderance in our duty to God. He might have gone and taken his wife along with him; they would both have been welcome. The servant came, and showed his lord these things. Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace; they will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ.

The master was angry. The ingratitude of those who slight gospel offers, and the contempt put upon the God of heaven thereby, are very great provocation to him, and justly so. Those who will not have Christ when they may shall not have him when they would. Go, said the master to the servants, go first into the streets and lanes; invite those that will be glad to come, bring in hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the scribes and pharisees, who thought themselves most likely to be guests at the Messiah's table, but publicans and sinners, these are the poor and the maimed. But yet there is room for more guests, and provision enough for them all. Go, then, into the highways and hedges; go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning from their work, and compel them to come in by force of arguments; be earnest with them, for in this case it would be necessary to convince them that the invitation was sincere. Be importunate with them and do not leave them till you have prevailed. This refers to the calling of the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to turn, when the Jews refused the offer, and with them the church was filled.

The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, shall appear not to have been made in vain; for if some reject it, yet others will thankfully accept the offer of it. Those that are very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome

to Christ as the rich and great; and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages and bodily infirmities. The consideration of the countenance which Christ's gospel gives to the poor, should engage us to be charitable to them. His condescensions and compassions toward them should engage ours. Many times the gospel has the greatest success among those least likely to have the benefit of it, and whose submission to it was least expected. Let us not be confident concerning those who are most forward, nor despair of those who are least promising. Also Christ's ministers must be very expeditious and importunate when inviting to the gospel feast. Nothing like compulsion was meant, but only that of reason and love; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but whatever can convince the understanding and affect the heart. Though many have been brought in to partake the benefits of the gospel, yet still there is room for more; for the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves. Christ's house shall at last be filled; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed.

Men not only destroy their souls for worldly advantages and by gross sins, but they so misplace even lawful things, and act so in the common affairs of life, that they perish by such matters as might have been attended to with great advantage, had they sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Alas, that men should be so alive to their little worldly interests, and yet so careless where eternal happiness or misery are at stake! May the Lord be pleased to inspire many ministers with that zeal and love which animates them to be earnest, affectionate, and solemn, in calling transgressors to repentance and faith in Christ.

15. The speaker probably referred to the reign of the Messiah, in which the carnal Jews expected all sorts of worldly delights.

23. Or, "fenced paths." The high roads and by-paths, corresponding with the streets and lanes in ver. 21.

¶ 91. Ver. 25-35. *Parables showing the necessity of consideration and self-denial.*

Here was a mixed multitude, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church. Christ tells them what

they must count upon; much the same with what he had gone through before them and for them. They must be willing to quit that which was very dear, and therefore must come to him thoroughly weaned from all their creature-comforts, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ. A man is not sincere, he will not be constant and persevering, unless he love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a sacrifice, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it, or as a temptation, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ. Mention is not made here of houses and lands; philosophy will teach a man to look upon those with contempt; but christianity goes further. Every good man loves his relations; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively hate them, must love them less than Christ. Our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up in our love to Christ. When our duty to our parents and relatives comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. The experience of the pleasures of the spiritual life, and the believing hopes and prospects of eternal life, will make this hard saying easy. Whosoever does not carry his cross, as those did, that were condemned to be crucified, cannot be my disciple. Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, must bear it in the way of duty.

He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates it by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter, that we must consider the perils of it. 1. Which of you, intending to build a tower, or stately house for himself, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost? All that take upon them a profession of religion, undertake to build a tower. Let them begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the Rock, and make sure work. Sit down and count the cost; let them consider, it will cost them the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts; it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of



holy duties. It may, perhaps, cost them their reputation among men, their estates and liberties; and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages for us, which come to us without money and without price? Many who begin to build this tower, do not go on with it; they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted fixed principle. It is true, we have none of us in ourselves sufficient to finish this tower, but Christ has said, My grace is sufficient for thee—and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it, and use it.

2. When we undertake to be Christ's disciples, we are like a man that goes to war, and therefore must consider the hazard of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered. Is not the christian life a warfare? We have many passes in our way, that must be disputed; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition. We ought to consider whether we can endure the hardness which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect, before we enlist ourselves under Christ's banner; consider whether we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth.

This parable also may be taken so as to teach us to begin speedily to be religious. Agree with thine adversary quickly. Those that persist in sin, make war against God; they rebel against their lawful sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; who knows the power of his anger? It is our interest to make peace with him; we need not send to desire conditions of peace, they are offered to us, and are highly to our advantage. Let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time; for delays are dangerous, and make after-applications difficult.

The application of this parable is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion. Count upon forsaking all, and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and yet continue to live godly.

In some way a disciple of Christ will be put to the trial. Every christian must possess the judgment and disposition of a martyr. These will be shown continually in lesser matters, and when it be-

comes necessary, God will strengthen them, and enable a man to bear extremities for his sake. The decided preference of Christ, in his whole character and offices, to the world and life itself, when placed in competition with him, is the most vital part of christianity, without which a man can be but a mere professor.

These considerations should not deter them from following Christ, but stir them up to seek help from him, to do so effectually and constantly, that they may not be as salt that has lost its savour, which is fit for nothing. May we then seek to be disciples indeed, and be careful not to grow slack in our profession, or afraid of the cross; that we may be the good salt of the earth, to season those around us with the savour of Christ and his truths.

35. See note, Matt. 5. 13.

## CHAPTER XV.

§ 92. Ver. 1-10. *Parables of the lost sheep and the piece of silver.*

When the worst sinners draw near to hear the gospel, they should be addressed with compassion as well as plainness of speech, nor should we ever shun to seek their good. Yet censure will fall, not only upon the most innocent and the most excellent persons, but upon the most innocent and most excellent actions, and we must not think it strange.

Christ vindicated his own conduct, and described the gracious dealings of God with sinners in three parables: the two first particularly show the means by which the Lord brings sinners to repent.

The parable of the lost sheep is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were gone astray, Isa. 53. 6; the value of the whole race to God was not so much as that of one sheep to him that had a hundred; what loss would it have been to God, if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels who are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to seek and save that which was lost.

To apply it in particular: the lost sheep represents the sinner as departed from God, and exposed to certain ruin if not brought back to him, yet not desirous to return. Christ is the Owner and Shepherd of his purchased flock, and counts them as his, even when in their sinful state. As a man would leave the rest of his flock in a safe state, and go to seek one lost sheep, so Christ is earnest in

bringing sinners home. By his word and providence he seeks out the lost sinner, by his Spirit overcomes his unwillingness to return to God; by his power he delivers him from the bondage of sin and Satan, and carries him above the temptations of the world, bringing him back to the favour and service of God by repentance, faith, and true conversion. There is joy in heaven; the Lord himself rejoices, and all his holy worshippers rejoice with him, over one sinner that repenteth; even more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. Angels are perfectly righteous, yet the repentance of a sinner, taken with its causes and its consequences, redounds more to the glory of God than their continuance in their primitive state. Every believer in his turn has occasioned this joy in heaven; but it is the cause of renewed joy when another and another is brought to repentance, even as a father rejoices more in the unexpected recovery of one son, who was given over for dead, than in the health and safety of all the rest, though he loves them with equal tenderness. Probably our Lord intended to warn the pharisees that the publican's sorrow for sin, and cries for mercy, were far more acceptable than their long prayers and ostentatious devotions.

In the parable of the lost piece of silver, the loser is supposed to be a woman, who has ten pieces of silver, and out of them loses only one. Let this keep up in us high thoughts of divine goodness, notwithstanding the sinfulness and misery of the world of mankind, that there are numberless beings, for aught we know numberless worlds of beings, that never were lost, nor steep aside from the laws and ends of their creation! That which is lost, is, one piece of silver, comparatively but of small value. Yet the woman seeks diligently till she find it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself. And here is also a great deal of joy for the finding of it.

The true repentance of a sinner implies his deliverance from eternal misery; and is a blessed effect of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and victory over the powers of darkness. One who was unprofitable and mischievous, the slave of Satan, is now made the disciple and servant of Jesus Christ. If, then, angels love the Lord and hate iniquity, they must rejoice ex-

ceedingly when they become acquainted with any work of his grace. And it is reasonable to suppose they do so rejoice. All true christians rejoice in such happy changes; they rejoice in proportion to their humility, zeal, and love. These dispositions are perfect in the angels; we may conclude their praise will be fervent and joyful.

Now if there is such joy in heaven, for the conversion of sinners, then the pharisees were very much strangers to a heavenly spirit, who disliked, and did all they could to hinder it; and who were exasperated at Christ when he was doing that work which was of all others most grateful to Heaven.

How then should we care to be assured that our repentance is unto salvation! And should not we be excited to labour and pray earnestly for the conversion of sinners around us? if only one should be rescued from destruction by our means, it will overpay the labours of a whole life.

§ 92. Ver. 11-16. *The prodigal son—His wickedness and distress.*

This parable especially shows the nature of repentance, and the Lord's readiness to welcome and bless all who thus return to him. It largely and fully sets forth the riches of gospel grace; and it has been, and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God.

The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, Rom. 3. 29; the same Lord over all, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common father. The younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner; that of every one of us in our natural state, but of some more especially. Without any cause, he ungratefully and improperly demanded of his father the goods that fell to his share.

It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts due to them. The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is, being content in this life-time to receive their good things. They covet only present gratification, but have no care for future happiness. Why did he desire to have his portion? He was weary of the good order

and discipline of his father's family. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, and never think themselves their own masters, till they have broken God's bands in sunder, and, instead of them, have bound themselves with the cords of their own lusts. Here is the origin of all the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be bound by the rules of God's government, they will know no other good and evil than what they themselves please. A shyness of God, and a willingness to disbelieve that he knows all things, are at the ground of the wickedness of the wicked. This youth was proud of himself, and had a great conceit of his own sufficiency. More young people are ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all their race by a foolish ambition to be independent, and this is at the bottom of sinners' persisting in their sin.

The father computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share. God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful. Now the condition of the prodigal represents to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

We may all discern some features of our own character in that of the prodigal son. Have we not counted God's service a burden? Have we not desired a worldly portion, and to be independent of him? Have we not gone far from God, and abused the blessings bestowed on us? While many have been ruined by prosperity in sin, many have to be thankful that they have been afflicted and disappointed, and corrected by their iniquities.

1. A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God. He took his journey from his father's house. Sinners have fled from God. This world is the far country in which they take up their residence, and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all.

2. A sinful state is a spending state: there he wasted his substance with riotous living. As to this world, they that live riotously, waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for. But this is to be applied spiritually; wilful sinners misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, mispend their time and all their opportunities; and the

gifts of providence, which were to enable them to serve God, and to do good, are made the food and fuel of their lusts.

3. A sinful state is a wanting state: when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, every thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want. Riotous living, in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread; especially when bad times hasten on the consequences. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God and the admonitions of conscience, for the pleasures of sense and the wealth of the world, and then are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessities for their souls, they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter.

4. A sinful state is a vile, servile state. When this young man's riot had brought him to want, his want brought him to servitude. The same wicked life which was represented by riotous living, is here represented by servile living; for sinners are slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country; sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work, and depend on him for maintenance. They that commit sin are servants of sin, John 8. 34. He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep, but to feed swine. The business of the devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding swine.

5. A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service. That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves satisfaction in, will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfies not, Isa. 55. 2. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are they to precious souls! They neither suit their nature, satisfy their desires, nor supply their need. He that takes up with them, feeds on wind Hos. 12. 1, on ashes, Isa. 44. 20.

6. A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. No man gave unto him; such poor are least pitied. This, in the application of the parable, intimated that those who depart from God, cannot be helped by any

creature. In vain do we cry to the world and to the flesh, those gods we have served; they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

7. A sinful state is a state of death, ver. 32. A sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family.

8. A sinful state is a lost state; This my son was lost,—lost to every thing that was good, lost to his father's house, they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God are lost souls; and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost irrecoverably.

9. A sinful state is a state of madness and frenzy. This is intimated in that expression, ver. 17, when he came to himself. Surely he was beside himself when he left his father's house. Madness is in the heart of sinners, Eccl. 9. 3.

What a vile master is Satan, who allures men into his service by the hope of worldly enjoyment, and then leaves them to the most abject state of wretchedness! The prodigal's wretched state only faintly shadows forth the awful ruin of man by sin. Yet how few are sensible of their own state and character!

16. By husks is meant the fruit of the carob tree, still used for feeding swine, and sometimes eaten by the poorer classes.

§ 92. Ver. 17-24. *The prodigal son—His repentance and pardon.*

Afflictions, when sanctified by Divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the heart is disposed to receive instruction; and they are sensible proofs of the vanity of the world and of the evil of sin. Apply it spiritually—when we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and that no man gives to us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Having viewed the prodigal in his abject state of misery, we are next led to consider his recovery from it. This begins by his coming to himself. He had been blind, both to his interest and his obligations; but by his afflictions he was brought to reflect on his own conduct. This is a

turning point in the sinner's conversion. The Lord opens his eyes, and convinces him of sin; then he views himself and every object, in a different light from what he did before. His first thought was of the plenty in which his father's servants lived, and which he might have enjoyed still, but for his own sin and folly. Thus the convinced sinner perceives that the meanest servant of God is happier than he is; that his wickedness has reduced him to a state of misery and danger, from which he cannot escape, unless he return to the Lord. Accordingly the prodigal resolved to arise and go to his father.

He resolves to confess his fault and folly—I have sinned. Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us to own that we have sinned, referring ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that confess their sins. He would not extenuate the matter; I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. Let those who are undutiful to their earthly parents, think of this; they sin against heaven, and before God. God is here called Heaven, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us. The malignity of sin is against Heaven. It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us. To regard God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance and return to him.

He would acknowledge that he was not worthy to be received as a son, but was willing to be employed as a servant. In this resolution he drew all his encouragement from the remembrance of his father's goodness, which at the same time aggravated his own crimes. Thus convinced sinners are led to hope in the mercy of that God against whom they have rebelled, and are excited to return to him with earnest supplications.

The prodigal arose, nor stopped till he reached his home, though we may well conceive his distress and fears. But while yet at a distance, his father, who is represented as regretting his absence, saw and knew him. Being full of compassion, he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, expressing entire reconciliation to him, while the son acknowledged his guilt and unworthiness. Thus the repenting sinner resolutely quits the bondage of Satan and his lusts, and returns to God by prayer, notwithstanding fears and discouragements. The Lord meets

him with unexpected tokens of his forgiving love. These humble his heart still further, while they inspire him with hope. God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more, Ezek. 18. 22. Again, the reception of the humbled sinner is like that of the prodigal. He is clothed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, made partaker of the Spirit of adoption, prepared by peace of conscience and gospel grace to walk in the ways of holiness, and feasted with Divine consolations; while the whole family of God rejoices at his being restored as a child to his Father's house, and recovered from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. His heavenly Father puts him in full possession of all the blessings of his salvation, seals him with the Spirit of adoption, comforts him beyond his largest hopes. He is encouraged, and even constrained by redeeming love to walk with pleasure in the ways of holy obedience.

Before, he was dead, dead in Adam, in whom all died; dead in law being under sentence of condemnation and death; and dead in trespasses and sins, which is a spiritual or moral death, in which all mankind are by nature, and is alive again; the spirit of life from Christ had entered into him, and Christ was formed in his heart; and a spirit of life was infused into him. Principles of grace and holiness were wrought in him, to do as well as to will.—(27.)

There is excellent food provided by our heavenly Father for all that arise, and come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls. It was a great change with the prodigal, who a little before would fain have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant and its comforts be, to those who have been labouring in vain for satisfaction in the creature! Now he found his words made good, In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.

§ 92. Ver. 25-32. *The elder brother offended.*

In the latter part of this parable we have the character of the pharisees, though not of them alone. They were exact in outward duties, proud of their fancied goodness, thought themselves peculiar favourites of Heaven, and could not endure that publicans and sinners should

receive any encouragement. When angels and the Lord of angels were rejoicing over repenting and pardoned sinners, they envied and murmured, like the elder son when told that his brother was returned, and that his father had therefore made rejoicings. How hateful must that disposition be, which leads any one to murmur and repine at an event that fills the holy inhabitants of heaven with rejoicing!

The father goes out to entreat his son to come in and share the feast; but he answered with boasting and complaints. This elder brother, no doubt, said more than was true, when he gloried that he had never transgressed his father's commands; if so, he would not have been so obstinate as now he was to his father's entreaties. However, we will admit it comparatively; he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of. This represents the condescension of the Lord, and the proud manner in which his condescensions are often received. The Jews in general showed the same spirit towards the converted Gentiles, and numbers in every age object to the gospel and its preachers on the same ground. What must that temper be, which excites a man to despise and abhor those for whom the Saviour shed his precious blood, who are objects of the Father's choice, and temples of the Holy Ghost; which induces a worm of earth to disdain him as a brother whom God numbers among his children! This springs from hateful pride, self-preference, and ignorance of a man's own heart.

Any difficulty in applying the latter part of the parable will disappear, if we advert to the general scope. Had the pharisees been obedient and deserving, their present privileges would have been continued, and their future inheritance secured. The same would have been the case with the Jews, notwithstanding the calling of the Gentiles, if they had been indeed the children of believing Abraham. In the mean time it was meet that all God's servants should rejoice in the repentance of sinners. We ought to labour and pray for their conversion, and to remember that it is God alone who hath made us to differ, if indeed we do differ. Though we are to

shun the society of those sinners by whom we are in danger of being infected, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, by whom we may get good, and do good to.

Thus our Lord closed the subject, leaving the pharisees to contemplate their own conduct, that they might give up their objections, and apply for a share in the blessings of the gospel, even as the father invited his son to partake of the feast. Many are infected by the same spirit. Many are apt to limit the mercies of God, and to give up as hopeless, persons guilty of crimes from which themselves have been graciously preserved. Or, they look with shyness and suspicion on their brethren who have been reclaimed, however unexceptionable their present conduct. And some may be observed tender to those whose easily besetting sin accords with their own, but with little patience to those whose sin betrays itself in things to which they feel little or no temptation. In these, and numberless other ways, the remains of the pharisee may be discerned.

As we must not envy the worst of sinners the gifts of common providence, so we must not envy them their pardon, and peace, and comfort, nor any gift which God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had been a prodigal; yet after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him than other apostles. But they who were elder brethren, who had served Christ when he was persecuting him, did not envy Paul his revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness, but glorified God; which ought to be an example to us, as the reverse of this elder brother. Especially let us adore the condescension of the Lord, in beseeching us to accept the blessings of salvation.

The mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as bright in his tender and gentle bearing with peevish saints, as in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance. The disciples of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bore with them, as a nurse with her children: see 1 Thess. 2. 7. This represents the goodness of God toward those that were froward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain. He bare Israel's manners in the wilderness; and especially with Jonah, whose case was

very parallel with this. It is also to teach all superiors to be mild and gentle with their inferiors. Let fathers not provoke their children to wrath, let masters forbear threatening, and both show all meekness.

It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are, and shall be ever with him. They are so in this world by faith, they shall be so in the other world by enjoyment, and all that he has is theirs; for if children, then heirs, Rom. 8. 17. If we are true believers, all that God is, and all that he has is ours; and if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has is theirs also, and yet we have not the less. They that walk in the light and warmth of the sun, have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much; such is Christ in his church. Happy will it be for those who thankfully accept his invitation; but those who persist in enmity and contempt will soon be silenced.

Lord, we have gone from thee, but do thou, in thy rich mercy, receive us, and by thy grace cause us to return. And may we go out no more; feast us with spiritual blessings, clothe us with the robe of Christ's righteousness. Oh for grace to live to thy glory, thanking thee for thine unspeakable gifts.—(37)

## CHAPTER XVI.

† 93. Ver. 1—12. *The parable of the unjust steward.*

All the children of men are here represented as stewards of what they have in this world. We are but stewards, for whatever we have, the property of it is God's; we have only the use of it, according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. This steward wasted his lord's goods. We are all liable to the same charge; we have not made a due improvement of what God has intrusted us with in this world, yet how few consider themselves in this light! His lord speaks as one sorry to be disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him. The steward cannot deny it, and therefore he must make up his accounts, and be gone. This may teach us that death will come, and deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good.

And that we must give an account to our Lord.

Now he began to consider, What shall I do? Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He knows that he cannot earn his bread by his labour. It is not a natural but a moral disability; it may remind us that we cannot get life for our souls by any labour for this world. To beg I am ashamed. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness. He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors or tenants. Now I will so oblige them, that they will bid me welcome to their houses. He would make them his friends, by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are. See what treachery is found even among those in whom trust is reposed.

When this was known, the lord referred to in this parable commended, not the iniquity, but the policy of the steward, only meaning that it was a politic plan of providing against distress. In that respect alone is it so noticed. Worldly men are more prudent in respect of their present interests, than the people of God are respecting their eternal concerns. In the choice of their object they are indeed foolish; but in their perseverance, and in their activity, they are wiser than believers.

Though we need the prudent foresight of this steward, we do not need his carnal policy, for the way of acceptance and of duty are plainly marked out for us. Indeed there are many who cannot enter into heaven by obeying the law, yet are too proud to ask it as the gift of God through Jesus Christ. They are not even willing to labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, and to seek the blessing by fervent prayer.

The unjust steward is not proposed to us as an example in cheating his master, or to justify his dishonesty, but to point out the management of worldly men, as an example for our attention in spiritual things. Thus, ch. 12. 39, the coming of Christ is compared to the coming of a thief, not in respect of theft, but of the sudden surprise. The whole context shows it was the master who is represented as commending this self-interest, and *not Christ*. It is in consequence of such commendation that Christ remarked as to

the children of this generation being wiser than the children of light.—(33.)

It would be well if the children of light would learn wisdom from the men of the world; and having chosen their object, would pursue it as singly and constantly as worldly men do their comparatively worthless interests. In that case wealth would be a privilege, and prove a blessing.

And though we cannot dig to purchase salvation, yet we must beg, incessantly beg, at the throne of grace for mercy to pardon all that is past.—(11.)

Our Lord counselled his disciples to make themselves friends of those worldly riches, which men idolize, as if they worshipped the idol mammon. The right use of riches is evidence of men's faith and love; and when the believer shall fail, shall be removed from his stewardship by death, they whom he has thus made his friends shall receive him to everlasting habitations. Not that this can merit a blessed recompense, yet it may and must be made use of, in subserviency to our pursuit of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, we may make ourselves friends with it, not by way of purchase or merit, but recommendation; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends: it is desirable to be befriended in the account to come.

As Christ's disciples usually were and are poor, he assured them that if any man were faithful in a very little, and consulted his Lord's will and honour in the use of it, he would be accepted as certainly as if much had been committed to him; the same disposition of mind would have rendered him faithful in more. The true riches signify spiritual blessings; and if a man spend upon himself, or hoard up what God has intrusted to him, as to outward things, what evidence can he have that he is an heir of God through Christ? He that serves God, and does good with his money, will serve God, and do good with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace and spiritual gifts; but he that buries the one talent of this world's wealth, will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware.

The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain. Let us be convinced that those are truly rich, and very rich, who

are rich in faith, and rich toward God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnestness of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, and expect our portion from them. If the Lord be God, let us decidedly serve him, and devote all we have to his glory.

7. The bills here mentioned, it should seem, were both bonds and contracts, probably engagements, whereby those who took land obliged themselves to pay a portion of the produce. To alter the terms of such a contract would be a lasting advantage to the tenant, and entitle the steward to much gratitude.—*Macknight*.

9. Use as much foresight and diligence about the concerns of eternity, as worldly-minded men do about the things of time. Instead of employing uncertain riches in any unrighteous way, use them in acts of piety and charity, with a subservience to real and everlasting happiness; that when flesh and heart, and all these enjoyments fail, and ye come to die, God may receive you, as faithful stewards, to eternal mansions in the heavens, the holy angels may take charge of your souls to conduct them to glory, and the poor members of Christ may receive you with joy in the other world, whose prayers were offered for you in this.—*Guyse*.

12. "Another's." The word man is improperly supplied; the reference here seems to be more properly to God.—*Schulefeld*.

§ 93. Ver. 13—18. *Christ reproves the hypocrisy of the covetous pharisees.*

To this application of the parable our Lord added a solemn warning. No servant can serve two masters. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it is certain that he will hate God, and despise him. He will make the things of God to help him in serving and seeking the world; but, on the other hand, if a man love God, and adheres to him, the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is laid plainly before us; Ye cannot serve God and mammon, so divided are their interests. If we determine to serve God, we must disclaim the service of the world.

When our Lord spoke thus, the covetous pharisees treated his instructions with contempt. But he warned them that though they justified themselves by various pretences, and maintained a fair show before men, yet God knew their hearts, which were full of wickedness. They were zealous for the ceremonial law and their own traditions; but Christ intimated to them that a more spiritual dispensation was about to be established, and though they opposed it, many would be eager to share its privileges. And they were not to suppose that this new dispensation would interfere with the honour to

be shown to the law of Moses, for not one tittle of that law would pass away without answering its intended purpose. The ceremonial law would be fulfilled in Him who was typified by it; the moral law would be magnified by His obedience to death, established by His religion, and vindicated from their corrupt interpretations. What they contended for as the law was a perversion of it; this our Lord showed in an instance respecting divorce, see Matt. 5. 32. So that while they pretended zeal for the law, they in fact perverted it. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions; for the more they are indulged, the more strong they grow.

There are many covetous sticklers for the forms of godliness, who commonly are the bitterest enemies to its power. While those who know the worth of their souls are pressing through dangers and temptations to the kingdom of God, these carp at the minister's doctrines and exhortations, explain away scriptures opposed to their sins, make void the law of God by their own notions, and try to prejudice others against the truth.

§ 93. Ver. 19—31. *The rich man and Lazarus.*

This is not like Christ's other parables, in which spiritual things are represented by worldly things. Here the spiritual things are represented in a description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. It is matter of fact which very often happens, that poor godly people, whom men neglect and trample upon, die out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows; and rich epicures, who live in luxury, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is the more grievous and terrible to them, because of the sensual lives they have lived. Is this a parable only? The discourse between Abraham and the rich man is an illustration of the description. Observe.

1. The different condition of a wicked rich man and a godly poor man in this world. We are here told concerning this rich man, that he never appeared but in great magnificence. His table was furnished with varieties and dainties. It is no sin to be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, nor to keep a plentiful table, if a man's estate afford it, and his duties do not forbid. We are not told



that he got his estate by fraud, oppression, or extortion; but Christ hereby shows, that a man may have a great deal of the wealth, pomp, and pleasure of this world, and yet perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. The sin of this rich man was his providing for himself only.

Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress. He was forced to beg his bread, and could not go himself, but was laid at the rich man's gate. Those who are not able to help the poor with their purses, should help them with their pains. He would be thankful for the crumbs from the table, the offal, the leavings of the dogs. This shows the distress and the disposition of the poor man. He was contentedly poor. Also Lazarus had no medicine for his sores, nor any to dress them, so that the dogs came and licked them. It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world. We are not told that the rich man forbade him his gate, or did him any harm, but we do not find that he had concern for him. Here was a real object of charity, which spake for itself, presented to him at his own gate. A little would be a great kindness to him, yet he took no notice of his case.

2. Here is the different condition of this godly poor man, and this wicked rich man, at and after death. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man. But the rich man had a pompous funeral. How little is the ceremony of a funeral to the happiness of the man! The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. How much did the honour done to his soul exceed the honour done to the rich man's body! Angels took care of it; it was carried by angels. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die. It was carried into Abraham's bosom. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death three ways; they go to the garden of Eden; they go to be under the throne of glory; and they go to the bosom of Abraham: the latter our Saviour here uses.

The next we hear of the rich man, is, that in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment. As the souls of the faithful, immediately after they are delivered from

the bondage of the flesh, are in joy and

felicity, so wicked souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment, endless and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. If there were only a peradventure of a man's sinking from ungodly self-indulgence into everlasting misery, surely a wise man would rather endure more than Lazarus without hesitation; but the matter is as certain as the word of God can make it. The misery of the rich man's state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned is in ch. 13. 28; Ye shall see Abraham and the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

3. It is not probable there are discourses between glorified saints and damned sinners, but this dialogue represents the mind and sentiments of both. It shows the hopeless misery and unavailing desires to which condemned spirits are reduced.

There are many in hell who were Abraham's seed after the flesh; nay, and many that were, in name and profession, the children of the covenant made with Abraham. It is the torment of this rich man's soul that he complains of; and such a fire the wrath of God is, fastening upon a guilty conscience; such the reproaches of a self-condemning heart. Nothing is more painful and terrible to the body than to be tormented with fire; therefore by that the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented. He does not say, Father Abraham, send for me to thy bosom, to lie where Lazarus lies; unsanctified souls do not, cannot truly desire the happiness of heaven; he asks as small a thing as could be asked, a drop of water to cool his tongue for one moment. He desires that Lazarus might bring it. There is a day coming, when those that now hate and despise the people of God would gladly receive kindness from them.

The damned in hell shall not have the least abatement of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain to expect the least drop of mercy in hell. Now it is said to us, Ask, and it shall be given you; but if we let slip this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us.

Abraham calls him son. See the folly

of those who rely on that plea, We have Abraham to our father. He puts him in mind of what had been his own condition, and that of Lazarus: Son, remember. The memories of damned souls will be their tormentors, and conscience will then be awakened and stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Now, sinners are called upon to remember, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. He does not tell him that he had abused his good things, but that he had received them. Thou receivedst them, and usedst them, as if they had been thine own, and thou hadst not been accountable for them. Or rather, they were the things which thou didst choose for thy good things, which thou didst content thyself with, and place thine happiness in. Remember what evil things Lazarus received, think what a large share of miseries he had in his lifetime. He received his evil things; he bore them patiently, received them from the hand of God. As wicked people have good things only in this life, and at death are for ever separated from all good, so godly people have evil things only in this life, at death they are for ever out of their reach.

Abraham puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery. Observe, heaven is comfort, and hell is torment. The soul, as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment, immediately, and does not sleep, or go into purgatory. In heaven there is everlasting consolation. He assures him that it was to no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus; there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners. The kindest saints in heaven cannot comfort or relieve any of the damned, who once were their friends. In this world, blessed be God, there is no gulf between a state of nature and grace, we may pass from the one to the other, from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It might have been prevented in time, but it cannot now be remedied to eternity. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irreversible, unalterable sentence.

He begs that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house. O send to prevent their coming hither; yet since there is no such gulf fixed between you and them,

send him thither. Send him back to my father's house; he knows where it is, has been there many a time. The rich man had five brethren, and would have them stopped in their sinful course. He desired to prevent their ruin, partly in tenderness to them; but rather, as we cannot imagine there is any charity or any natural affection in hell, we may suppose it a mere circumstance mentioned to introduce what follows; or their coming to that place of torment, would aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to show them the way thither. How many would now desire to recall or to undo that which they have written or done! He did not even expect that Abraham could help him out of that place of torment, or give him any lasting relief in it. His request was almost the language of despair, and made way for it.

There is no request granted in hell. Those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham a justification of praying to saints departed, as they go far to seek for proofs, when the practice of a damned sinner must be valued for an example, so they have no encouragement to follow the example, when all his prayers were made in vain. Abraham leaves them to the testimony of Moses and the prophets, the ordinary means of conviction and conversion; they have the written word, which they may read and hear read. There is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament to convince that there is another life after this, a state of rewards and punishments; of that the rich man would have his brethren assured, and for that they are referred to Moses and the prophets. He urges his request yet further—It is true, they have Moses and the prophets, and if they would but duly regard them, it would be sufficient; but they do not, they will not; yet it may be hoped, if one went to them from the dead, they would repent. This would be a new thing, and more startling; surely it would bring them to change their wicked habits and course of life. Foolish men are apt to think any method of conviction better than that God has chosen and appointed.

Abraham insists in the denial, with a conclusive reason. If they regard not the public revelation, neither would they be wrought upon by a private testimony to themselves. A messenger from the dead could say no more than what is said in the scriptures, nor say it with more

authority, and those who are infidels in one case would certainly be so in another. The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word, would triumph over a witness from the dead; and though a sinner might be frightened at first by such a testimony, he would soon return to his hardness.

If one should come from hell to warn sinners, it may be he would tell them of hell in such a manner, as would tend more to drive men into despair, and set them blaspheming as they do in hell, than to excite them to strive for salvation, and diligently to use the means God has appointed.—(21.)

The scripture is now the ordinary way of God's making known his mind to us, it is presumption to prescribe any other way, nor have we any ground to expect or pray for the grace of God to work upon us in any other manner, when that is rejected and set aside. What our Saviour here said, was soon after verified in the unbelieving Jews, who would not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and then would not be persuaded, though Lazarus rose from the dead; nay, would not be persuaded, though Christ also rose from the dead. Let us seek to the law and to the testimony, Isa. 8. 19, 20, for that is the sure word of prophecy, which we may depend upon, 2 Pet. 1. 19.

Circumstances occur in every age which sufficiently show that no terrors, arguments, or convictions, can effect true repentance without the special grace of God renewing the sinner's heart. Those who have perished in sin, could indeed come and tell such a tale of woe as would harrow up the soul; departed saints also could relate astonishing things of their own blessedness and the misery of the damned, but the testimony of the Lord is more sure. Let every one take heed to this sure word, and pray to God for a new heart and humble spirit, without which all means must prove ineffectual.

We are not required to prefer the temporal situation of Lazarus to that of the rich man. But who, possessing a sound understanding, would hesitate to prefer the character and entire existence of the one, to the character and entire existence of the other? Who would not prefer the poverty, sores, and all the bodily wretchedness of the beggar, followed by endless bliss, to the riches, health, finery, and

sumptuous fare of his lordly superior, succeeded by everlasting torment in the fire that shall never be quenched? We cannot have estimated the happiness of man's existence, if we have left eternity out of the calculation.—(65.)

23. In the latter ages of the Jewish state, as well as among the Greeks and Romans, it was customary to recline on couches when at meals. This explains the meaning of the expression, Abraham's bosom, which expression is used by many Jewish writers: see *Gill*. Heavenly happiness is often spoken of in scripture figuratively as a feast.

## CHAPTER XVII.

§ 94. Ver. 1—10. *To avoid offences—To pray for increase of faith—Humility taught.*

We are here taught that to give offences is a great sin. We must expect that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness in the nature of man, and therefore should provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom they come. It is no abatement of their guilt by whom the offence comes, nor will it lessen their punishment, that it is impossible but that offences will come. Forgiving offences is a great duty, and what we should make conscience of. When your brother trespasses against you, take heed to yourselves, lest, when your spirits are provoked, you speak unadvisedly. Take heed lest you then say amiss: see Matt. 18.

Personal injuries it is impossible now to offer to the Saviour; but the state of our hearts towards him will be judged by our treatment of his followers: and he has warned us, that it were better a millstone were hanged round our neck, and we buried in the depths of the sea, than that we should injure one of these little ones who believe in him.—(38.)

The apostles perceived the excellency and the difficulty of such conduct, and that faith in the Divine mercy was the principle from which it must proceed. They therefore besought Jesus to increase their faith. Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties in the way of our forgiving our brother. As with God nothing is impossible, so all things are possible to him that can believe. This showed they were fully persuaded he was able thus to influence their minds, and to remove those impediments to the exercise of faith, which they could not. Christ's answer evidently implied an approval of their

petition, and was a further recommendation of that powerful principle to which all things are possible. The idea of a tree being planted, taking root, and growing in the unstable ocean, is a most striking figure to represent to us that by faith we may do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth us. When we would follow the example of our forgiving Lord, or perform any duty opposed to corrupt nature, we shall feel the weakness of our faith, and be led to look to Jesus as the author and the object of our faith, beseeching him to increase that precious grace, on which the exercise of all others depends, and the Lord will answer that request. But we must always observe that faith and self-confidence cannot exist together.

Our Lord showed his disciples their need of deep humility. A man who possessed and maintained a servant, would deem himself entitled to his services through the day, yet would not thank him for them at night, though he had been faithful and obedient. And the Lord has such a property in every creature, as no man can have in another, he never can be indebted to them for their services, nor do they deserve any recompense. A constant succession of services and obedience, with the deepest sense of dependence and obligation to the Lord, are here taught.

§ 95, 96. Ver. 11—19. *Ten lepers cleansed.*

We have here the cure of ten lepers. They stood afar off, as by the law their disease obliged them to do, though they might consort together. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, Have mercy on us. It is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they fail not. Jesus sent them to the priest, who was the judge of the leprosy. This was a trial of their obedience, it was fit it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case. Those that expect Christ's favours must take them in the way and method in which he pleases to bestow them.

While the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed; but, probably, he designed to have the priest's testimony to the perfectness of the cure. As they went they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest. We may expect God to meet us with mercy, when

we are found in the way of duty. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; go and open thy case to a faithful minister, and though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of means.

One of them, and but one, returned to give thanks. When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him discharged, which was all that the rest desired, he turned back toward the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory, before he received the benefit. Those who have received mercy from God should publish it to others, that they also may praise God, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. He made a particular address of thanks to Christ. We ought to give thanks for the favours the Lord bestows upon us, particularly for recoveries from sickness. It becomes us to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. Christ noticed the one who had thus distinguished himself, that he was a Samaritan. The Samaritans had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them as the Jews had, yet it was one of them who glorified God.

Of the many that receive mercy from God, very few return to give thanks in a right manner. When men's vices bring sickness upon them, and the Lord in mercy restores their health, how few return to give glory to God, not only with their lips but in their lives! But those often prove most grateful from whom it was least expected. The rest had their cure, and had it not revoked, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude; but this man had his cure confirmed particularly, Thy faith hath made thee whole. The others obtained the outward cure, he alone got the spiritual blessing. When a man is convinced of guilt and pollution, when he experiences the comfort of forgiveness, and the power of the new creating Spirit, he will glorify God and thankfully adore the Saviour.

§ 97. Ver. 20—37. *Christ's kingdom.*

The pharisees considered that the doctrine of Jesus implied a claim to the character of the promised Messiah; and, according to their notions of temporal dominion, they wanted to know when the kingdom of God should come. To this Christ replied, it would not come with

outward observation, with splendour and authority; the kingdom of God was among them, or rather within them. It was a spiritual kingdom set up in the heart by the power of Divine grace. This was already effected as to many whom the pharisees despised, and must be wrought in them also, or they would have no advantage from the kingdom of the Messiah. He further told his disciples that they would soon be deprived of his personal presence, and warned them against the seducers who would pretend to be the Messiah.

Our blessed Redeemer hath finished his sufferings, and hath ascended into his glory. The generation among whom he preached and wrought miracles rejected and crucified him, but his day of vengeance arrived, his powerful indignation, like lightning, spread through the land. And the gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world, shall fly through the nations; the kingdom of the Messiah is to be diffused far and wide over the face of the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts.

Observe how it had been with sinners formerly, and in what posture the judgments of God, which they had been fairly warned of, found them. Look back at the old world; come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom. Observe concerning both, that they had fair warning of the ruin coming upon them for their sins. They did not regard the warning given them; they were very secure, indulged in their pleasures, and counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state. They had no heart to prepare against threatened judgments; they continued in their security and sensuality till the threatened judgment came. Here is especially shown what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to the secure and sensual.

Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. When Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such security as this. They will go on in their neglect and opposition to Christ and his gospel, till all the christians are withdrawn from among them, and gone to the place of refuge. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, sinners will be found altogether regardless; in like manner the sinners of every age

go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end.

His disciples and followers ought to care to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day; and to flee according to the direction that should be given. Their flight from Jerusalem must be expeditious, and not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs. When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning. Remember Lot's wife; persevere in your flight; be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by turning from christianity, and complying with the Jews, shall lose it with them. Those do best for themselves who trust God in the way of duty.

When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will preserve those who are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others who were nearest to them. Though all things seem to come alike to all, yet, sooner or later, it shall appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not. They inquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity: they tried him with another question, Where Lord? The answer is, Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.\* Wherever the wicked are, who are marked for perdition, they shall be found by the judgments of God.

This passage also speaks to us. Let those who profess to be Christ's disciples, hasten to escape for their lives, to renounce all for Christ, to prepare to meet their God. Let them only fear being deluded into sinful methods of seeking present security. The time is speedily coming, when many who have lived together in families, been related, and even have partaken of the same ordinances, will be separated; one shall be taken to heaven, another left to perish in hell. Visit then our souls, O Lord, with thy salvation, and remember us with the favour thou bearest to thy chosen people.

37. The Roman standards were eagles. The allusion is to the state of the Jewish nation in its wretched or dead state, about to be devoured by the fierce and powerful Roman armies.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 18-30. M. 19. 13-30. Mk. 10. 13-31.  
Ver. 31-33. M. 20. 17-19. Mk. 10. 32-34.  
Ver. 35-43. M. 20. 29-34. Mk. 10. 46-52.

§ 98. Ver. 1-8. *The parable of the importunate widow.*

This parable has the design of it pre-

fixed. Christ spake it to teach that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. It supposes that all God's people are praying people. It is our privilege and honour that we may pray; it is our duty, we ought to pray, we sin if we neglect it. We ought always to pray; the duty of every day requires it. But what seems particularly designed here, is to teach us constancy and perseverance in requests for spiritual mercies, relating to the church of God, or when we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies; we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall not seek God's face in vain.

Christ shows, by a parable, the power of importunity among men. Observe the bad character of the judge; he stood in no awe of the wrath of God, or of the censures of men. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The poor widow manifestly had right; but, according to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, and connived at the wrong her adversary did. Yet she got justice done by her continual craving.

Our Lord applies this to encourage all God's praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein. He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them. In order to obtain this blessing, they must cry day and night to him; this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. Lord, mortify this corruption; Lord, arm me against this temptation. They may perhaps meet with discouragements in their prayers and expectations; but they have assurance that mercy will come at last. If this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail! She came to an unjust judge; we come to a righteous Father, John 17. 25, one who regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress. She had no friend to speak for her; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who even lives to make intercession for us. She had no encouragement to ask; but we are told to ask, and are promised it shall be given us. She could have access to the judge only at some certain times; but we may cry to God at all hours. Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against

her; but our importunity is pleasing to God.

The conclusion, ver. 8, probably means that when our Lord came to deliver his church from their Jewish persecutors, he would find but little faith in the land. The Jews would be hardened by unbelief, and the harassed christians ready to doubt his word. It may also refer to the general weakness of faith of his tempted and afflicted people, while waiting for him. And that infidelity will greatly prevail before the second coming of Christ. Even to the end there will still be occasion for the same complaint; the world will grow no better when it is drawing towards its end. Bad it is, and bad it will be, worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous.

3. Do me justice against mine adversary.—*Whitby.*

7. Bear long with them—Is he slack towards them?—*Elsley.*

§ 98. Ver. 9—14. *The pharisee and the publican.*

The scope of this parable is prefixed. It was designed for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They had confidence in themselves before God, and a high opinion of their own righteousness, depending upon the merit of it. It is matter of fact every day.

Two men went up to the temple to pray; to offer up their personal devotions, as usual at that time. Christ now is our Temple, and to him we must look in all our approaches to God. The pharisee went to the temple to pray, it was a public place. The character Christ gave of the pharisees, was that they did all their works to be seen of men. Hypocrites keep up external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people. God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

What the pharisee says shows that he trusted to himself that he was righteous. We will suppose he was free from gross and scandalous sins. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, partly as an act of temperance, partly of devotion, and he was charitable with his worldly estate. All this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the

righteousness of this pharisee; yet he was not accepted, and why not? His giving God thanks for this seems to be mere formality. He does not say, By the grace of God I am what I am; but only, God, I thank thee. He dwells with delight upon this subject, as if his business to the temple was to tell God how very good and religious he was. He trusted to it as righteousness, and pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God. There is not one word of prayer in all he said. He went up to the temple to pray, but was full of himself and his own goodness; the favour and grace of God he did not think worth asking. God, I thank thee, was but a word of course in a pharisee's mouth, as it must be in that of every proud man who so uses it. He spake of himself as if he had not been a sinner by nature or practice; he spake of the publican as one for whom there was no pardon. Let us beware of presenting proud devotions to the Lord.

The pharisee despised others. He thought meanly of all mankind but himself. He speaks as if he were better than any. He thought meanly, in particular, of this publican. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is evil. Could not he pray without reproaching his neighbours? There could not be plainer evidence of pride and malice.

The publican's address to God was the reverse of the pharisee's, it was full of humility and of repentance for sin, and desire toward God. His gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, expressed great seriousness and humility; in a sense of his unworthiness, he kept at a distance. He lifted up his heart to God in holy desires, but his iniquities were gone over his head, as a heavy burden, so that he was not able to look up, Ps. 40. 12. The dejection of his looks indicated the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin. He smote upon his breast, in holy indignation at himself for sin. Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain from which the streams of sin flow.

His prayer was short, but to the purpose; God, be merciful to me a sinner! Blessed be God, that we have this prayer upon record, as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it, went to his house justified; so shall we

be, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ. God, be merciful to me a sinner; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for if he be not, I am for ever miserable. God be merciful to me. He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice guilty before God. He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God; upon that alone he relies. The poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his refuge. Nothing will save him but mercy, mercy. He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy. He comes as a beggar for an alms, when ready to perish for hunger.

We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worth while to inquire how they sped. Our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican went to his house justified rather than the other. The proud pharisee goes away rejected of God; his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation. He is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to Heaven, obtains remission of his sins. The reason is, God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble.

Lord, grant that we may not be tinctured with pride, but give us grace to be humble. Beholding the nature in which we are born, and the condemnation in which we are involved, both by original and actual transgression, may we be led by the Holy Spirit to God in Christ, acknowledging we do not merit forgiveness, while in sorrow and contrition we seek it. Justification is of God in Christ; therefore the self-condemned, and not the self-righteous, find justification before God, and are exalted.—(37.)

11, 13. The pharisee was in the court of the Israelites, the publican in that of the Gentiles.

§ 104. Ver. 15-17. *Children brought to Christ.*

This passage fitly follows after the parable of the publican, to confirm that those shall be accepted with God, and honoured, who humble themselves, and for them Christ has the choicest and best of blessings. Observe, those who are blessed in Christ, should desire to have their children also blessed in him, and should testify the true love they have for their children, by

concern about their souls.—They brought to him infants, very young, as some think. None are too little, too young, to be brought to Christ, who knows how to show kindness to those who are not capable of doing service to him. One gracious touch of Christ will make our children happy. They brought infants to him, that he might touch them, in token of the application of his grace and Spirit to them, for that always makes way for his blessing, which likewise they expected.

It is no strange thing for those who apply to Jesus Christ, for themselves or for their children, to meet with discouragement, even from those who should countenance and encourage them. Many whom the disciples rebuke, the Master invites: Jesus called them unto him, when, upon the disciples' check, they were retiring. It is the mind of Christ, that little children should be brought to him. The promise is to us, and to our seed: therefore He who dispenses promised blessings, will bid them welcome to him with us. So welcome are children to Christ, that those grown people are most welcome to him, who have most of the disposition of children; not pretending to merit as the pharisee did, but gladly owning themselves indebted to free grace, as the publican. Unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God. We must receive that kingdom as children, not by purchase, and must call it our Father's gift.

§ 105. Ver. 18—30. *The ruler hindered by his riches.*

We are every one concerned to inquire what we shall do to get to heaven. This implies such a belief of an eternal life after this, as atheists and infidels have not; such concern to make it sure, as a careless unthinking world have not; and such willingness to comply with any terms, that it may be made sure, as those have not who are resolutely devoted to the world and the flesh.

Those who would inherit eternal life, must apply to Jesus Christ as their Master, their teaching Master, so it signifies, and their ruling Master, and so they shall for certain find him. There is no learning the way to heaven but in the school of Christ. Those who come to Christ as their Master, must believe him to have not only a Divine mission, but Divine goodness. Christ would have this ruler

know, that if he understood himself aright in calling him good, he did, in effect, call him God; indeed he was so.

Our Master, Christ himself, has not altered the way to heaven from what it was before his coming, but has made it more plain, easy, and comfortable, and provided for our relief, in case we take a false step. Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to establish them. Govern thyself by the commandments. It is not enough for us to keep ourselves free from the gross violation of them; Christ, in his sermon upon the mount, has explained their extent and spiritual nature, and so we must observe them. Men think themselves innocent, because they are ignorant; so this ruler did. He boasts that he began early in a course of virtue, that he continued in it, and had not in any instance transgressed. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the Divine law, and with the workings of his own heart; had he been Christ's disciple, and learned of him, he would have said the contrary.

The great things by which we are to try our spiritual state, are, how we stand affected to Christ and to our brethren, to this world and to the other; by these this man was tried. None shall inherit eternal life, who are not willing to take their lot with the Lord Jesus. If a man have true affection to his brethren, he will, as there is occasion, distribute to the poor. If he think of the other world, as he ought, he will desire to have treasure in heaven, and will reckon that sufficient recompense for all he has left or lost, or laid out for God, in this world.

Many have a great deal in them very commendable, yet perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler liked all Christ's terms, but that which would part between him and his estate. Many who are loth to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day. They are very sorry that they cannot serve God and mammon: but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their worldly gain.

The best obedience of mere man to the holy commandment of God, must leave him under condemnation, instead of entitling him to eternal life. The more confident persons are on this subject, the plainer it is that they do not understand the spiritual meaning of the law—that



they are strangers to repentance, to faith, to their true character, to their own hearts, and their need of a free salvation. Their boasted obedience also will be found mere outside show; the love of the world in some form or other lies at the root.

In Christ's discourse with his disciples upon this occasion, we may observe riches are great hinderance to many in the way to heaven. Christ asserts the difficulty of the salvation of rich people very emphatically by a proverbial expression, denoting it to be extremely difficult.

They do not find fault with what Christ required, as unreasonable. But they know how closely most men cleave to this world, and are ready to despair. There are such difficulties in the way of our salvation as could never be got over, but by that grace of God which is almighty. His grace can work upon the soul, so as to alter the bent and bias of it; and it is he that works in us both to will and to do.

Men are apt to speak too much of what they have left and lost, of what they have done and suffered for Christ, which appears in Peter. But we should rather acknowledge this not to be worth notice, and be ashamed there has been any regret or difficulty in doing it. Whatever we have left, or laid out for Christ, shall be abundantly made up to us in this world and in that to come, notwithstanding our weaknesses and infirmities, in advantages which, to those that know how to value and improve them, will abundantly countervail all losses. Yet that is not all; in the world to come they shall receive life everlasting.

§ 106. Ver. 31—34. *Christ foreshows his death.*

The Spirit of Christ, in the old testament prophets, testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11. This proves that the scriptures are the word of God, for they had their exact and full accomplishment; and that this was He that should come, for, whatever was foretold concerning the Messiah, was verified in him. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, thus it became him.

The ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings, are here insisted upon. This was that part of his sufferings, by which, in a spiritual manner, he satisfied God's justice for the injury we have done him in his honour by sin. But here, as always, when Christ spake of his

sufferings and death, he foretold his resurrection as taking away both the terror and reproach of his sufferings.

The disciples' prejudices were so strong, that they would not understand these things literally, and they could not understand them otherwise. They had read the Old Testament, but they had not seen any thing in it that should be accomplished in the disgrace and death of this Messiah. They were so intent upon the prophecies which spake of his glory, that they overlooked these which spake of his sufferings. People run into mistakes, because they read their bibles by halves, and are as partial in the prophets as they are in the law. They are only for the smooth things, Isa. 30. 10. Thus now we are too apt, in reading the prophecies yet to be fulfilled, to have our expectations raised of the glorious state of the church in the latter days.

We are as backward to learn the intended lessons from the humiliation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, as the disciples were to regard his declarations concerning these events; and for the same reason, because self-love, and a desire of worldly objects, close our understandings, so that we are in the dark about the plain meaning of the scriptures, while we are endeavouring to spy out some hidden sense that agrees better with our opinions. Were it not for this, we should see that it is best for our present comfort, as well as our eternal good, when we renounce any earthly possession or enjoyment for Christ's sake.

§ 108. Ver. 35—43. *A blind man restored to sight.*

This poor blind man sat by the wayside, begging. He was not only blind, but poor, the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save. They are wretched and miserable, for they are both poor and blind, Rev. 3. 17. He sat begging, for he was blind, and could not work for his living. Those ought to be relieved by charity, whom the providence of God has disabled to get their own bread.

Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. Those who want sight, should make the better use of their hearing; and when they cannot see with their own eyes, should, by asking questions, make use of other people's eyes. So this blind man did, and

thus understood that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. It is good to be in Christ's way; and, when we have an opportunity of applying to him, not to let it slip.

His prayer has both faith and fervency. He believes Christ to be Jesus a Saviour; he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly begs his favour. Christ is a merciful King; those that apply to him as the Son of David, shall find him so. Those who are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings, will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they meet with opposition and rebuke. Christ encourages poor petitioners, whom men frown upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to bid them welcome. He has more tenderness and compassion for distressed supplicants than any of his followers. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped, and commanded the man to be brought to him. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us. By spreading our case before God, with a particular representation of our wants and burdens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of.

The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encouraging promises, and grounded on them, shall not be in vain. The fruits of Christ's favour are doubly comfortable, when we are saved by faith. The grace of Christ ought to be thankfully acknowledged, to the glory of God. Those whom he healed, pleased him best when they praised God, as those shall please God best who praise Christ, and do him honour; for in confessing that he is Lord, we give glory to God the Father. It is for the glory of God if we follow Christ, as those will do whose eyes are opened. The people that saw it, could not forbear giving praise to God. We must give praise to God for his mercies to others, as well as for mercies to ourselves.

Would we rightly understand these things, we must come to Christ like the blind man, earnestly beseeching him to open our eyes, and to show us more and more clearly the excellency of his precepts, and the value of his salvation.

35. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, consider that Jesus healed blind men, both as he approached Jericho, and as he departed from it, considering that the former is related by Luke, the latter by Mark, and both by Matthew, who speaks of two blind men. The expression used by Matthew, "and behold," does not necessarily imply any note of time in connexion with the events related immediately be-

fore or after. The circumstances related of each are very likely to have been applicable to both. There are, however, strong reasons for considering, that though two were healed, it was at the same time: this is the view taken by *Newcome* and *Doddridge*, who observe, that if one blind man had been healed on the approach of Jesus to Jericho, another would not have been blamed so soon after for supplicating the same benefit. The words of Luke may be translated generally, When he was nigh unto Jericho.

42. "Made thee whole." So rendered, ch. 17. 19.—*Scholefield*.

## CHAPTER XIX.

V. 29-38. M. 21.1-9. Mk. 11.1-10. J. 12.12-14. V. 45-48. M. 21.12,13. Mk. 11.15-19.

§ 109. Ver. 1-10. *The conversion of Zaccheus.*

The name of Zaccheus speaks him a Jew. He was chief among the publicans. He was rich. Christ had showed how hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God, yet presently produces an instance of one. Zaccheus had a great desire to see Jesus. To get his curiosity gratified in this matter, because he was little, he climbed up into a sycamore-tree. Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ, will break through difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see him.

His getting into the tree made him conspicuous: had he not been so low of stature he would not have done so. Even the imperfections of our persons may become subservient to the grace of God in our eternal salvation—(11.)

Christ invited himself to Zaccheus' house. Wherever Christ comes he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. See how Christ went before him with the blessings of his goodness, and outdid his expectations. He that had a mind to know Christ, shall be known of him. Our Lord bid him make haste, and come down. Those whom Christ calls, must come down, must humble themselves, and make haste, and come down. Zaccheus must not hesitate; it needs not consideration, whether he should welcome such a guest.

Zaccheus was overjoyed to have such honour. His receiving of Jesus into his house was an indication and token of his receiving him into his heart. We may well receive him joyfully who brings all good along with him, and, when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there, which shall flow to eternity. The censorious Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a sinful man. Was it not Christ's errand into the world to seek and save men that

are sinners? Whither should the physician go but to the sick?

Commentators in general rightly refer our Lord's knowledge of the name and circumstances of Zaccheus to his Divine omniscience.—(75.)

Zaccheus gave proofs publicly that he was now a true convert, ver. 8. He does not expect to be justified by his works, as the pharisee, but by his good works he will, through the grace of God, evidence the sincerity of his faith and repentance. He stood; which denotes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people. What we do that is good we must do as unto him; we must appeal to him, and approve ourselves to him. He makes it appear that there is a change in his heart, and that it is true repentance, for there is a change in his way.

Zaccheus had a good estate, and, whereas he had been hitherto laying up treasure for himself, and thus doing hurt to himself, he resolves that for the future he will do good to others. Not, I will give it by my will when I die; but, I do give it now, even the half of my goods. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. It well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

Zaccheus was conscious that he had gotten some wealth by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promises to make restitution, to restore four-fold. This was the restitution a thief was to make, Exod. 22. 1. True penitents will not only own themselves in general guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them. He had done wrong by false accusation; this was the temptation of the publicans, of which John Baptist had given warning when he addressed the publicans and the soldiers. They had influence with the governors, which gave them opportunity. He does not say, If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution; (some are honest when they cannot help it;) but he will do it voluntarily. Observe, he does not think that his giving half his estate to the poor, will atone for the wrong he has done. God hates robbery by burnt-offerings, and we must first do justly and then love mercy;

and we are not to reckon that our own which we have not come honestly by. We may suppose he did not give half to the poor till restitution was made.

This declaration clears his character from the aspersions of the multitude. He who, after giving half his goods to the poor, and restoring fourfold for the injuries he had committed, would have property left, could not have been guilty of many deliberate acts of injustice.—(90.)

Zaccheus is declared to be a happy man, now he is turned from sin to God. Now that he is saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his. Christ is come to his house, and where Christ comes he brings salvation with him. He is and will be the Author of eternal salvation to all that own him. Zaccheus, being a publican, was deemed a heathen; but being a true penitent, he is as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been a publican. When we see fruits meet for repentance, we may conclude that salvation is come to the sinner, that he is become a son of Abraham by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and may hope that mercy is intended to his family also.

What Christ had done to make Zaccheus happy, was consonant to the great design of his coming into the world. Observe the deplorable case of the sons of men; they were lost. The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world; lost, as a city is lost when it is revolted to the rebels; as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness; as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable. The gracious design of the Son of God is, He came to seek and save. He came from heaven to earth, to seek that which was lost, and to bring it back; and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ came into this lost world to seek and save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. He seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him.

§ 109. Ver. 11-27. *The nobleman and his servants.*

This parable in some respects resembles that of the talents, Matt. 25. It behoves us well to study the nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, that we may understand our present situation, and form just expectations in respect of the future.

Our Lord now drew near to Jerusalem, and his numerous attendants supposed he was about to set up his kingdom with authority. To remove these errors he spake this parable. The nobleman signifies Christ himself, ascending to heaven, to sit on his throne as Mediator, till his second coming. The servants denote his professed disciples. The pound given to each to trade with represents something intrusted to each, in the proper use of which they may glorify their Lord, and prove themselves faithful servants during their abode on earth. Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnishes with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, from those to whom he gives power he expects service. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal, 1 Cor. 12. 7. And as every one has received the gift, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. 4. 10. We must continue to mind our business till our Master comes, whatever difficulties or opposition we may meet with. Those only that endure to the end shall be saved. The citizens who hated the nobleman represent the Jewish nation. His return to take vengeance has reference to the punishment of the Jews, but it also represents the final judgment of all men. The account required resembles that in the parable of the talents, and the punishment of the avowed enemies of Christ, as well as of hypocritical professors, is represented.

The principal difference is, that the pound given to each seems to point out the gift of the gospel, which is the same to all who hear it; but the talents, distributed in different proportions, seem to intimate that God has given different capacities and advantages to men, by which this one gift of the gospel may be differently improved.—(11.)

Those that are diligent and faithful in serving Christ, are commonly blessed in being made blessings to the places where they live. They shall see the travail of their soul, and not labour in vain. And yet, all that are alike faithful, are not alike successful.

They acknowledged their obligations to their Master, for intrusting them with these abilities and opportunities to do him service. Lord, it is not my industry, but thy pound, that has gained ten pounds. Paul, who gained the ten pounds, acknowledges, I laboured, yet not I. By

the grace of God, I am what I am, and do what I do; and his grace was not in vain, 1 Cor. 15. 10. He will not speak of what he had done, but of what God had done by him, Rom. 15. 18. But while views of the Redeemer's abundant grace encourage the humble believer to increasing diligence, hypocrites will be deterred from activity by hard thoughts of him, and persuasion that his service is unprofitable. Whatever may be the pretences of slothful professors, the true reason is indifference to the interests of Christ and his kingdom, and their coldness therein. They care not whether religion gets ground or loses ground, so they can but live at ease. But those who will not serve their Master with what he bestows, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? And whoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by his wrath.

12. Our Lord here alludes to the case which, no long time before, had actually occurred in Judea. Those who had pretensions to the Jewish throne, travelled to Rome, to have it confirmed to them. This was done by Herod the Great and by Archelaus. In the case of the latter, the Jews sent an embassy to oppose his appointment, ver. 14. On his return he inflicted severe punishments on those who had opposed him, ver. 27.—*T. H. Horne.*

16. The mina, here translated pound, was equal to about nine pounds of our money.

22. This is not to be taken as conveying an idea that God demands of men more than he has furnished them for, but only represents the lord arguing with the servant on his own narrow and base principles.—*Doddridge.*

23. By usury is not meant what is now usually so called, but a fair and lawful profit on the use of borrowed money. Masters sometimes intrusted their slaves with money to employ in trade, for which they were accountable.

§ 111. Ver. 28—40. *Christ enters Jerusalem.*

We have here the account of Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem. He was willing to suffer and die for us; and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him? It was not inconsistent with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a public entry into Jerusalem, before he died. Thus he made himself more taken notice of, that the ignominy of his death might appear the greater.

Christ is entitled to dominion over all creatures, and may use them as he pleases. He has all men's hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to the disciples taking them away, as soon as they were told the

Lord had occasion for them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers, that they shall bring what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it. Many are willing to attend Christ at other people's expense, who care not to be at any charge themselves; but these disciples not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but cast their own garments upon it.

When Christ came nigh to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the whole multitude of the disciples to rejoice and praise God; and their spreading of their clothes in the way was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. They praised God for the mighty works they had seen, the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the raising of Lazarus, which is particularly mentioned, John 12. 17.

They expressed joy and praise; Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord. Christ is the King, he comes in the name of the Lord, clothed with Divine authority, commissioned from heaven to give law, and treat of peace; blessed be he. Let us praise him. He is blessed for ever, and we will speak well of him. Peace in heaven. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be glory in the highest. Compare this song of the saints on earth with that of the angels; both agree to give glory to God in the highest—there the praises of both centre. They rejoice in the peace on earth, so we rejoice in the peace in heaven, and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven.

Christ's triumphs, and his disciples' joyful praises, vex proud pharisees, who are enemies to him and to his kingdom. They expected he should rebuke his disciples. But it is the honour of Christ, that, as he despises the contempt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble. Whether men praise Christ or not, he will, and shall, and must be praised. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot; for as God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, so he can perfect praise out of the mouths of those children.

What will be the feelings of the multitude of the disciples when they shall see the Lord return in glory to judge the world! How will they then rejoice and praise God for all the mighty works they have seen! Anticipating this, let us

now welcome every display of his grace in the conversion of sinners, and the spread of his gospel. If there were none on earth to adore the Divine perfections in the work of our redemption, the very stones must upbraid the ingratitude and insensibility of mankind.

§ 111, 112. Ver. 41—48. *Christ laments over Jerusalem.*

When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, instead of being affected by thoughts of the sufferings that awaited him, he foresaw with compassion the miseries coming on that ungrateful persecuting city, by the awful justice of God. But her day of mercy was then expired, her eyes were blinded, her doom was passed. Our Lord therefore foretold the entire destruction of the city, and the havoc that should be made of its inhabitants, because they knew not the time of their visitation, had rejected, and would crucify their King.

The things that belong to our peace relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application. When we enjoy the word of God powerfully preached to us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened, then is the time of visitation we are concerned to improve. Those who have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last, in this their day, their eyes are opened, and they bethink themselves, all will be well yet. It is the amazing folly of multitudes who enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they do not improve the day of their opportunities. The sin and folly of those that persist in contempt of gospel grace cause great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should do so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent; he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish.

Who can behold the holy Jesus, in the prospect of the miseries that awaited his murderers, weeping over the city where his precious blood was about to be shed, without perceiving that the image of God in the believer, consists much of benevolence and compassion? Surely, then, they cannot be right who take up any doctrines of truth so as to be hardened towards their fellow-sinners. But let every one remember, that though Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he executed awful vengeance upon it. Though he delighteth not in the

death of a sinner, but had rather he should repent and live, yet he will surely accomplish his awful threatenings on those who neglect his salvation. May he then come and cleanse our hearts by his Spirit from all practices which defile them! May sinners, on every side, become attentive to the words of truth and salvation.

Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee, O hard heart? Consider what these tears import. They drop from an eye that takes the full compass of the forlorn state into which unreconciled sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, or for a light matter, nor for himself. He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them; the severity of God's justice, and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects will be when it shall finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe Him that did; at least, believe his tears!—(40.)

Jesus showed zeal for the present purifying of the temple. Though it must be destroyed ere long, it does not therefore follow, that no care must be taken of it in the mean time. Hereby, though he was represented as an enemy to the temple, and that was the crime laid to his charge before the high priest, he made it to appear that he had more true love for the temple, than those who had such veneration for its corban, its treasury, as sacred; for its purity was more its glory than its wealth. He put the temple to the best use that ever it was put to, for he taught daily therein. It is not enough that the corruptions of a church be purged out, but the preaching of the gospel must be encouraged. When Christ preached in the temple, observe how industrious the chief priests and scribes were to seek an opportunity, or pretence rather, to do him a mischief, and how respectful the common people were—they attended with care, and would not lose a word. Some read it—All the people, as they heard him, took his part; as a reason why his enemies could not find what they might do against him.

Our blessed Saviour, in the house of prayer, preached daily to the people, as well as prayed with them, and they were constant to hear his sermons as well as at their prayers. Prayer sanctifies the word, and the word fits us for prayer. If we would glorify God, and edify ourselves,

we must diligently honour and attend all his ordinances, and on all occasions.—(73.)

41. The mount of olives, from which our Lord was then descending, commands a very full view of Jerusalem: the streets and houses appear as plainly from this station as if in a model.

42, 43. These verses minutely and accurately describe the Roman method of investing towns, and the manner in which the siege of Jerusalem was carried on. The trench, or wall of circumvallation, by which Titus surrounded Jerusalem, was nearly five miles in circumference, but was thrown up in three days, and entirely shut up the Jews in that city.

## CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1—8.	M. 21. 23—27.	Mk. 11. 27—33.
Ver. 9—19.	M. 21. 33—46.	Mk. 12. 1—12.
Ver. 20—40.	M. 22. 15—40.	Mk. 12. 13—31.
Ver. 41—44.	M. 23. 41—46.	Mk. 12. 35—37.
Ver. 45—47.	M. 23. 1—7, 14.	Mk. 12. 38—40.

§ 114. Ver. 1—8. *The priests and scribes question Christ's authority.*

Christ was a preacher of his own gospel. He not only purchased salvation for us, but published it to us, which gives abundant encouragement to us to receive it. This likewise puts honour upon the preachers of the gospel. And when he was preaching the gospel to the people, he had this interruption. Satan and his agents do all they can to hinder preaching the gospel to the people, for nothing weakens Satan's kingdom more.

Christ's enemies are here said to come upon him. That word is used only here, it intimates that they came upon him suddenly, hoping to catch him unprovided with an answer. They thought to frighten him with this question. They came upon him in a body, with violence. But how could he be terrified with the wrath of men, when it was in his own power to restrain it, and make it turn to his praise? We may learn, that it is not to be thought strange if even that which is evident be disputed, as a doubtful thing, by those who shut their eyes against the light. Christ's miracles plainly showed by what authority he did these things, and sealed his commission; yet this is here questioned!

Men often pretend to inquire into the evidences of revelation, and the truth of the gospel, when only seeking apologies for their own infidelity and disobedience.

Christ answered these priests and scribes with a plain question concerning the baptism of John, which the meanest of the common people could answer—Was it from heaven, or of men? They all knew

it was from heaven, there was nothing in it that had an earthly tendency, it was all heavenly and Divine.

It is not strange if those that are governed by reputation and worldly interest, shut up the plainest truths, and stifle the strongest convictions, as these priests and scribes, who had no other reason why they did not say it was of men, but because they feared the people. What good can be expected from men of such a spirit?

Those that bury the knowledge they have, are justly denied further knowledge. It was just with Christ to refuse to give account of his authority to those who knew the baptism of John to be from heaven, yet would not believe in him, nor own their knowledge.

§ 114. Ver. 9—19. *The parable of the vineyard and husbandmen.*

Christ spake this parable against those who resolved not to own his authority, though the evidence of it was so full and convincing. The scope and design is to show that the Jewish nation, by persecuting the prophets, and Christ himself, provoked God to take away their privileges. The work of God's ministers is, to call upon those who enjoy the privileges of the church to bring forth fruit accordingly. The old testament prophets were sent on this errand to the Jewish church, to demand from them the duty and obedience they owed to God.

It has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused; they have been beaten and treated shamefully by those who resolved to send them empty away. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot bear to be called upon to do it. God sent his Son into the world, to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, and one would have thought that he would have been revered and received. The putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity: no other could be expected than that God should destroy those wicked husbandmen. Those that live in the neglect of their duty to God, know not into what degrees of sin and destruction they run.

How many there are who resemble those that murdered the prophets and crucified Christ, in their ingratitude and enmity to God, and in aversion to his service, desiring to establish their own authority, and to live according to their lusts, without control! Let all who are

favoured with God's word inquire whether they make proper use of their advantages. Awful will be the doom, both of those who reject the Son, and of those who profess to reverence Him, yet render not the fruits in due season.

To the application of the parable is added their deprecation of the doom included in it. When they heard it, they said, God forbid, let not this be done. Though they could not but own that for such a sin such a punishment was just, yet they could not bear to hear of it. It is the folly and stupidity of sinners, that they persevere in sinful ways, though at the same time they dread the destruction at the end of those ways.

Christ beheld them. He looked upon them with pity and compassion, grieved to see them deceive themselves thus to their own ruin. He beheld them, to see if he could discern any show of relenting. He referred them to the scripture; How can you escape the judgment of God, when you cannot prevent the exaltation of Him whom you despise and reject? The Lord Jesus will be exalted to the Father's right hand; he has all judgment and all power committed to him, he is the Corner-stone and Head-stone of the church; and if so, his enemies can expect no other than to be destroyed. Even those that slight him, that stumble at him, and are offended in him, they shall be broken, it will be their ruin; but those that not only reject him, but hate and persecute him, as the Jews, he will fall on them and crush them to pieces, will grind them to powder.

The chief priests and scribes were exasperated; they perceived that he spake this parable against them. A guilty conscience needs no accuser. It was not because they had any fear of God or of his wrath, but only because they feared the people, that they did not now seize him. When the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, the fairest warnings, both of the sin they are about to commit, and of the consequences of it, make no impression upon them. Though they deprecate the punishment of the sin, in the next breath they are projecting how to commit it.

§ 115. Ver. 20—26. *Of giving tribute.*

We have here Christ evading a snare which his enemies laid for him, by proposing a question to him about tribute. The mischief designed is more fully related

here than in the other gospels. The plot was to deliver him to the power and authority of the governor. Since they cannot be his judges, they will be his accusers. Thus Christ's word must be fulfilled by their policy, that he should be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

The persons they employed must seem to value Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it. They thought to flatter him into incautious freedom and openness with them, and so to gain their point, but he was not pleased with the testimony of such hypocrites, nor thought himself honoured by it. It is true that he accepts not the person of any, but it is as true that he knows the hearts of all. Their case is a question—Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cesar? For us Jews, us the free-born seed of Abraham, us that pay the Lord's tribute, may we give tribute to Cesar? Their pride and covetousness made them loth to pay taxes, and then they would have it a question, whether it was lawful or not.

He perceived their craftiness. Those that are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot with all their art conceal them from his cognizance. He did not give them a direct answer, but reprov'd them for offering to impose upon him; and called for a piece of money, and asked whose stamp it bore, who coined it. They owned, It is Cesar's money. You should first have asked, saith Christ, whether it was lawful to pay and receive Cesar's money among yourselves. In civil things you ought to submit to the civil powers; and so, if Cesar protects you in your civil rights by laws and the administration of justice, you ought to pay him tribute; but you are not bound to be of Cesar's religion; you must render to God the things that are God's, must worship and adore Him only, and not any image that Cesar sets up. They could not fasten upon any thing wherewith to excite either the governor or the people against him. They marvelled at his answer, it was so unexceptionable, and evidenced such wisdom and sincerity. They had nothing to object, and durst ask him nothing else, lest he should expose them.

The Wisdom which is from above will direct those who teach the way of God truly, to avoid the snares laid for them by wicked men, and will instruct so clearly in duty to God, to the king, and to all

men, that those of the contrary part will have no evil to say of them.

§ 115. Ver. 27—38. *Concerning the resurrection.*

In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, who have endeavoured to subvert the fundamental principles of revealed religion. The sadducees asserted that there is no resurrection, and no future state; not only no return of the body to life, but no continuance of the soul in life; no world of spirits, no state of recompense and retribution for what was done in the body. Take away these truths, and all religion falls to the ground.

It is common for those that design to undermine any truth of God, to load it with difficulties. So the sadducees, when they would weaken people's faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, put a question upon the supposition of it, which they thought could not be answered either way to satisfaction. The case perhaps was matter of fact, it might be so, of a woman that had seven husbands. Now in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? But when death puts an end to that relation, it is not to be resumed again. We wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form notions of that world of spirits by this world of sense.

Much of our business in this world, is, to build up families, and provide for them. Much of our pleasure in this world is in our relations. But marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life only, and not for the world that is to come. Note, there are more worlds than one; a present visible world, and a future invisible world; and it is the concern of every one of us to compare worlds, this world and that world, and to give the preference in our thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. The inhabitants of that world shall be those who are accounted worthy to obtain it; that are interested in Christ, who purchased it for them, and have holiness wrought in them by the Spirit, who prepares for it. They have not a legal worthiness, upon the account of any thing in them, or done by them; but an evangelical worthiness, upon the account of the inestimable price which Christ paid for the redemption of the purchased possession. It is a worthiness imputed, by which we are glorified, as well as a righteousness imputed, by which we are justified. The corrupt nature is taken away, and the dispositions of the soul are by the grace of God conformed to



that state. They shall obtain the resurrection from the dead, that is the blessed resurrection: for that of condemnation is rather a resurrection to death, to eternal death, than from death.

What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot express or conceive, 1 Cor. 2. 9. See what Christ here saith of it. Those that are entered into the joy of their Lord, are entirely taken up therewith. Where the body itself shall be a spiritual body, the delights of sense are all vanished; and where there is perfection of holiness, there is no occasion for preservatives from sin. They cannot die any more. In this dying world there must be marriage, in order to the filling up the vacancies made by death. Here death reigns, but thence it is for ever excluded. They are equal to the angels; they have glory and bliss no way inferior to the holy angels. Saints, when they come to heaven, in all respects shall have equal privileges with the angels. They are the children of God; so they are as the angels. In the inheritance of sons, the adoption of sons will be completed. Hence believers are said to wait for the adoption, even the redemption of the body, Rom. 8. 23. We have the nature and disposition of sons, but it will not be perfected till we come to heaven. They are the children of the resurrection; that is, they are made capable of the employments and enjoyments of the future state. God owns those only for his children, who are children of the resurrection, who are born from above, and prepared for that world.

There were eminent discoveries made of the truth, that there is another life after this, in the early ages of the church. Moses showed it, when he calls the Lord, as the Lord calls himself, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. They were then dead as to our world, and their bodies were turned into dust; how then could God say, not, "I was," but, "I am" the God of Abraham? It is impossible the living God and Fountain of life should continue related to them as their God, if there were no more of them in being than what lay in the cave of Machpelah, undistinguished from common dust; we must therefore conclude they were then in being in another world. It is here added, For all live unto him, that is, all who, like them, are true believers, do live. Their souls,

which return to God that gave them. Eccl. 12. 7, live to him as the Father of spirits; and their bodies shall live again, at the end of time, by the power of God. And when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was their Happiness and Portion, a God all-sufficient to them, Gen. 17. 1, their exceeding great Reward, Gen. 15. 1. He never did that for them in this world, which answered the full extent of his undertaking; therefore there must be another life after this, in which he will do for them what will amount to a fulfilment of the promise, that he would be to them a God. He has wherewithal to make every soul happy that lives to him; enough for all, enough for each.

33. The word translated resurrection, should rather be rendered, future state, not a momentary event, but the future life or existence of the dead. —*Dwight.*

37. *Josephus*, speaking of martyrs, says, They live unto God, as do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs.

§ 115, 116. Ver. 39—47. *The scribes silenced.*

We have here the scribes commending the reply which Christ made to the sadducees concerning the resurrection. Christ had the testimony of his adversaries, that he said well. We have them here struck with an awe of Christ, and of his wisdom and authority. His own disciples, though weak, yet being willing to receive his doctrine, durst ask him any question; but the sadducees, who cavilled at his doctrine, durst ask him none.

We have them here silenced with a question concerning the Messiah. If he be David's Lord, why do we call him his Son? They could not reconcile this seeming contradiction. Thanks be to God, we can do this; Christ, as God, was David's Lord, but Christ, as Man, was David's son. He was both the Root and the Offspring of David, Rev. 22. 16. By his human nature he was the Offspring of David, a Branch of his family; by his Divine nature he was the Root of David, from whom David had his being and life, and all the supplies of grace.

We have the scribes here described in their black characters, and a public caution given to the disciples to take heed of them. Take heed of being drawn into sin by them. Take heed of being brought into trouble by them. Beware of them, for they are proud and haughty; they desire to walk about the streets in long robes, as those that take state and take

place. They loved to have people make obeisance to them, and were very proud of the precedence that was given them in all places of concourse. They were covetous and oppressive, and made their religion a cloak and cover for it; for a show they made long prayers, perhaps long prayers with the widows when in sorrow, as if they had a pious concern for them, and thus endeavoured to get their money and effects into their hands.

Christ reads them their doom—These shall receive a more abundant judgment; double damnation, both for their defrauding the poor widows, and for their abuse of religion, particularly of prayer, which they used as a pretence for carrying on worldly and wicked projects. Dissembled piety is double iniquity. Then let us beg of God to preserve us from pride, ambition, covetousness, and every evil thing; and to teach us to seek that honour which cometh from him alone.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1—4. Mk. 12. 41—44.  
Ver. 5—36. M. 24. 1—42. Mk. 13. 1—33.

§ 117. Ver. 1—4. *Christ commends a poor widow.*

From the offering of this poor widow, learn that what we rightly give for the relief of the poor, and the support of God's worship, is consecrated to God; and our Saviour sees with pleasure whatever we have in our hearts to give to the relief of his members, or for his service. He still sees every hand that is stretched out for the purpose. Pounds were little to the rich men; two mites were all to her. Christ judged of the offering by the mind of the giver, rather than by the value of the gift. The poorest are able to perform works of kindness, and can exercise charity according to their ability. Blessed Lord! the poorest of thy servants have two mites also—they have a soul and a body; persuade and enable us to offer both unto thee. Though they are thine own already, yet thou wilt graciously accept them; and how happy shall we be in thine accepting of them!—(73.)

§ 118. Ver. 5—19. *Christ's prophecy.*

When we speak of the temple, it should be of the presence of God in it, of the ordinances of God administered in it, and the communion which his people have with him there. It is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our dis-

course dwell upon pomps and revenues, and the dignities and powers of officers and rulers; for the King's daughter is all glorious *within*. With what contempt Christ spake of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly! ver. 6. Did we by faith foresee the blasting and withering of all external glory, we should not set our hearts upon it as those do who cannot see, or will not look so far before them.

With what curiosity those about Christ inquire concerning the time when this great desolation should be, ver. 7. It is natural for us to covet to know future things and the time of them. Christ answers their inquiries with clearness and fulness, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice. Many shall come in his name, ver. 8, usurping the title and character of the Messiah. Many pretended to be the deliverers of the Jewish church and nation from the Romans, by which multitudes were drawn into their ruin.

Christ gives a needful caution as to this; Take heed that ye be not deceived. Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine is the gospel of God; we must be deaf to all intimations of another Christ and another gospel. They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments upon the Jews and their neighbours. When they rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free, they were left to themselves, to grasp at civil liberty in ways that were sinful, and therefore could not be successful. Though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also.

There shall be fearful sights, and great signs from heaven, uncommon appearances. The caution Christ gives is, Be not terrified. As to the fearful sights, let them not be fearful to you, who look above the visible heavens to the throne of God's government. And as to the famines and pestilences, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his, that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, and that he will keep them from the noisome pestilence. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings and within are fears, yet then be not you terrified; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do you,

and therefore be not afraid of them; for, these things must first come to pass, there is no remedy. Be not terrified, for if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you be able to bear up under what is yet before you?

Their being persecuted would be a sign of the approach of the destruction of the city and temple, which Christ had now foretold. Nay, this should be the first sign of ruin coming. Before God's judgments are brought upon the Jews, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity by laying their hands on you. The ruin of a people is always introduced by their sin; and nothing introduces a surer and sorer ruin than the sin of persecution.

Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purport with what he had told them when he first called them to follow him, Matt. 10. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing that if the gospel obtained among the Jews, their usurped power was at an end, raised all their force to oppose it, filled people's minds with prejudices against it, and made the preachers and professors hateful to the people.

Christ encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with. Your suffering such severe things, and being so hated by the worst of men, will be a testimony that you are good. Your courage and cheerfulness and constancy under sufferings, will be a testimony that you believe what you preach, and that you are supported by Divine power, and that the Spirit of God and his glory rests upon you. God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you. Do not depend upon your own ingenuity, your own prudence and policy, and do not distrust or despair of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the Divine grace. I promise you the special assistance of Divine grace; I will give you a mouth and wisdom. This proves Christ to be God, for it is God's prerogative to give wisdom, and he it is that made man's mouth. A mouth and wisdom together, completely fit a man both for services and sufferings; wisdom to know what to say, and a mouth wherewith to say it as it should be said. This was remarkably fulfilled presently after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this mouth and wisdom, when the apostles were brought before the priests

and rulers, and answered them so as to make them ashamed.

You shall suffer no real damage by all the hardships they put upon you, ver. 18; There shall not a hair of your head perish. It is a proverbial expression, denoting the greatest security. Some think that it refers to the preservation of the lives of all the christians that were among the Jews, when they were cut off by the Romans. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ said, He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. Though we may be losers *for* Christ, we shall not, we cannot be losers *by* him in the end.

It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings and those of the nation, to maintain a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always easy, ver. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls; get and keep possession of your souls. It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous, trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls; not only that they be not destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not distempered now, nor our possession of them disturbed and interrupted. It is by patience, christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls, and keep out all those impressions which would put us out of temper.

§ 118. Ver. 20—28. *Christ's prophecy.*

We may view the prophecy before us very much in the nature of those old testament prophecies, which, together with their great object, embrace, or occasionally glance at some nearer object of immediate importance to the church.—(25.)

Having given an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, Christ shows them what all those things would issue in, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation; which would be a type and figure of Christ's second coming.

1. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem besieged, encompassed with armies, ver. 20; and when they saw that, they might conclude that the desolation of the city was nigh.

2. He warns them, upon this, to shift for their own safety, ver. 21. Abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people, Rev. 18. 4.

3. He foretells the terrible havoc that

should be made of the Jewish nation, ver. 22. Those are the days of vengeance often spoken of by old testament prophets, which would complete their ruin; the blood of the old testament martyrs must now be required. After days of patience long abused, there will come days of vengeance. The greatness of that destruction is set forth, by the inflicting cause of it, which is wrath upon his people, the wrath of God. And by the particular terror it would be to mothers and nurses. There shall be great distress in the land, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

4. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans. Multitudes of them shall fall by the edge of the sword. The rest shall be led away captive, not into one nation, as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans, which gave them an opportunity of keeping together, but into all nations. Jerusalem itself was trodden down of the Gentiles. The Romans laid it quite waste, as a rebellious and bad city.

The scattered Jews around us preach to us the truth of christianity; and prove, that though heaven and earth shall pass away, the words of Jesus shall not pass away. They also remind us to pray, for those times when neither the literal, nor the mystical Jerusalem, shall any longer be trodden down by the Gentiles, and when both Jews and Gentiles shall be turned to the Lord.

5. He describes the great terror that people should generally be in. There shall be many signs and prodigies in the heavens, ver. 25. Men's hearts shall fail them for fear, ver. 26. The powers of heaven shall be shaken, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble. Our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions, because at the end they shall be literally accomplished, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 12. As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving Jews, so the great day will be to all unbelievers.

6. The destruction of Jerusalem was in a particular manner an act of Christ's judgment, the judgment committed to the son of man. This was an evidence of the first coming of the Messiah. It was an earnest of his second coming. They shall see a specimen of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible, what will that more awful day be?

7. He encourages all the faithful dis-

ciples in reference to the terrors of that day, ver. 28. When these things begin to come to pass, when Jerusalem is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, then do you look up, look heavenward, in faith, hope, and prayer, and lift up your heads with cheerfulness and confidence, for your redemption draws nigh. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; then had the churches rest. When he comes to judge the world, he will redeem all that are his from their grievances.

8. Here is one word of prediction, that looks further than the destruction of the Jewish nation, and which is not easily understood, ver. 24; that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Some understand it of what is past; so Hammond. The Gentiles, who have conquered Jerusalem, shall keep possession of it, and shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world is become christian. Others understand it of what is yet to come; so Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other, for the most part, till the time comes when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

A brief detail of the unparalleled miseries endured by the Jews when Jerusalem was destroyed, will show how minutely the prophecies concerning its destruction were fulfilled. There is nothing similar in history as to the extent of the miseries; nor was there ever a destruction of which so authenticated a detail is given, as that recorded by Josephus. This not only confirms the declarations of Moses and the prophets, but also the more minute particulars so remarkably revealed by Christ, and which were delivered in a time of perfect peace, yet were all fulfilled ere the lapse of a single generation. The deceptions practised by false Christs or pretended prophets, occasioned commotions which soon spread over Judea. The Jews were goaded to revolt by the oppressions of their Roman governor, and openly

rebelled. But wars and rumours of wars were not confined to Judea. In Alexandria fifty thousand Jews were slaughtered at one time. Italy was so convulsed that four emperors were put to death in two years. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes also prevailed. Josephus says, The constitution of nature was confounded, and no common calamities were portended. There were signs and fearful sights in the heavens which might have awed the most daring. Christians were persecuted in the most cruel manner, but the gospel was preached throughout the known world. They bore testimony to their faith, even in death, during these persecutions, but in the judgments against Jerusalem not a christian perished. The last sign was given. The idolatrous ensigns of the Romans were seen round Jerusalem, but the armies for a time withdrew. Many then escaped from the city. The christians fled to Pella, in the mountains of Gilead, beyond Jordan. But a larger number of Jews going up to the passover, or fleeing for security, crowded within the walls of Jerusalem. The robbers, who had banded together during the preceding commotions, also hastened into the city, joined the mob, and ruled within the walls. Plunder, murder, and destruction abounded, thousands were slain in the contests of different factions, and the provisions for the siege were pillaged and burnt. The extremities suffered by famine were dreadful. The most loathsome offal and refuse was greedily devoured, and a mother slew and ate her own child! as foretold by Moses, Deut. 28. 56. Other instances need not be related. Yet the Jews refused to yield, and fought with the fury of desperation. The Romans built a wall round the city, and crucified their prisoners and the fugitives. Five hundred were crucified daily before the city, till materials, and even room for the crosses could not be found. Gold having been discovered in one of these bodies, two thousand deserters were cut up in one night in search of treasure they might have swallowed. One hundred and fifteen thousand dead bodies were carried out at one gate during the siege; eleven hundred thousand in all perished. Every place in the city was covered with dead bodies. When the city was taken, Titus desired to save the temple, but it was set on fire by a soldier, and six thousand perished among the burning ruins. Jeru-

salem was devoted to utter destruction by the Romans. The city was razed from the foundation, and a great part of it ploughed up. Vast numbers perished in other parts of the country. Many thousands were sold for slaves, till the slave markets were so glutted that no one would buy them. On one occasion, eleven thousand captives were left destitute of food, and perished from hunger. So fully did the Divine judgments come upon the Jews; and their city is set as an example before us, to show that iniquity will not pass unpunished, and that the terrors of the Lord, and his threatenings against impenitent sinners, shall all be executed, even as his word was true and his wrath great upon Jerusalem.—(50. 86.)

24. *Lightfoot, Whitby*, and others of the best commentators, are of opinion that these words refer to a period when the Jews shall be restored, that is, when the times of the four great kingdoms predicted by Daniel shall have expired, and the fifth, or the kingdom of Christ, shall be set up in their place, when the scattered sheep of Israel shall be again collected, and become one fold under one Shepherd, as citizens of the new Jerusalem.

25. The tossing of the sea figuratively denotes civil commotion.

§ 118. Ver. 29—38. *Christ exhorts to watchfulness.*

1. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by. As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons, when second causes have begun to work, so we may, in the disposal of events, expect something uncommon, when God is already raised up out of his holy habitation, Zech. 2. 13; then stand still, and see his salvation.

2. He charges them to look upon those things as sure and very near. The destruction of the Jewish nation was near, ver. 32; This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. There were some then alive, that should see it; some who now heard the prediction of it. It was sure, the sentence was irreversible, the decree was gone forth, ver. 33; heaven and earth certainly shall pass away, but Christ's words shall not; whether they take hold or not, they will take effect, and not one of them fall to the ground.

Or, this race and family of Abraham shall not be extinct; it shall survive as a nation, and be found in the destined

circumstances when the Son of Man shall be revealed.—(25.)

3. He cautions them against security and sensuality, ver. 34, 35; Take heed to yourselves. This is the word of command given to all Christ's disciples, Take heed to yourselves, that you be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own-corruptions. We cannot be safe, if we are secure. Our danger is, lest the day of death and of judgment should come upon us unawares, when we do not expect it, and are not prepared for it. Lest, when we are called to meet our Lord, that he found the furthest from our thoughts, which ought always to be laid nearest our hearts, lest it come upon us as a snare. For so it will come upon the most of men, who dwell upon the earth, and mind earthly things only, and have no converse with heaven. It will be a terror and a destruction to them; it will put them into an inexpressible fright, and hold them fast, for a doom yet more frightful. Our duty, in consideration of this danger, is—We must take heed lest our hearts be burdened and overloaded, and so unfitted and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment. Two things we must watch against, 1. The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing ourselves in the gratifications of sense to sinful excess. 2. The inordinate pursuit of the good things of this world. The heart is overcharged with the cares of this life. The former is the snare of those that are given to their pleasures; this is the snare of the men of business, that will be rich. We have need to guard, not only lest at the time when death comes, but lest at any time, our hearts should be thus overcharged. Caution against sin, and care of our own souls, must be constant.

4. He counsels them to prepare for the great day of Christ's coming, ver. 36. Here see what should be our aim—that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things; that, when the judgments of God are abroad, either we may not be involved in the common calamity, or it may not be that to us, which it is to others. And that in the day of death we may escape the sting of it, which is the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet we must aim, not only to stand acquitted before the Son of man as our Judge, Ps. l 5, to have boldness in the day of Christ, but to stand before him, to

attend on him as our Master. God, by the good work of his grace in them, makes believers meet for this happiness, and by the good will of his grace toward them, accounts them worthy of it; but a great part of our worthiness lies in acknowledgment of our own unworthiness.

Do you ask how you may be found worthy to stand before Christ at that day? Be humbled before God for your past lives; come unto him by true, hearty, unfeigned repentance, be changed and become new creatures, pray earnestly for the pardon of your sins through Christ, pray continually that God would turn your hearts from your old sins every day more and more—then come the last judgment when it will, ye shall be found to stand worthy before Christ at his coming. The repentant sinner is he that shall find favour in the sight of God at that day. Surely the consideration of this should move us to change our lives. Those who never yet were humbled for their sins, let them now begin; those who have already begun, let them go forward and continue.—(56.)

Watch therefore, and pray always. Watching and praying must go together. Neh. 4. 9. Watch against sin, watch to every duty, and to the improvement of every opportunity of doing good. Pray always; be always in a habitual disposition to that duty; keep up stated times for it, abound in it; pray upon all occasions. Those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, that live a life of prayer in this world.

In the two last verses we have an account how Christ disposed of himself during those days betwixt his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, and the night in which he was betrayed. He was all day teaching in the temple. Christ preached on week-days as well as sabbath-days. He was an indefatigable preacher, and he preached in the midst of those that he knew sought occasion against him. At night he went out to lodge in the mount of Olives. Early in the morning he was in the temple again; and the people were forward to hear one whom they saw forward to preach.

May we begin, employ, and conclude each of our days in reading and hearing his word, obeying his precepts, and imitating his example, that whenever he cometh we may be found watching.

32. See note, Matt. 24. 34. The very different  
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sense in which commentators take the word rendered "generation," may again be noticed. *Fry* quotes authorities to show, that "it does not necessarily refer to the coexistence of the same race of men; it also means a family or nation deriving their origin from one common stock." *Bloomfield* says, "Notwithstanding the dissent of some, the phrase (it is admitted by the best commentators) can only mean this very generation, the race of men now living."

## CHAPTER XXII.

V.1, 2. M.26.1-6. Mk.14.1-3.  
V.3-14. M.26.14-20. Mk.14.10-17.  
V.19, 20. M.26.26-28. Mk.14.22-24.  
V.21, 22. M.26.21,24. Mk.14.18,21. J.13.21.  
V.24. M.26.34. Mk.14.30.  
V.39-62. M.26.36-75. Mk.14.32-42. J.18.1-27.

§ 120. Ver. 1-6. *The treachery of Judas.*

The year of the redeemed was now come, which had been from eternity fixed in the Divine counsels, and long looked for by those who waited for the consolation of Israel. It was the same month, and the same time of the month, in the beginning of months, *Exod. 12. 2*, that God by Moses brought Israel out of Egypt; thus the Antitype answers the type.

Here we have Christ's sworn enemies contriving his death; the chief priests, men of sanctity, and the scribes, men of learning, seeking how they might kill him, either by force or fraud!

A treacherous disciple joined them. Christ knew all men, and had wise and holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple; how he who knew Christ so well, came to betray him we are here told; Satan entered into Judas. It was the devil's work, who thought hereby to ruin Christ's undertaking; to have broken his head, but it proved only the bruising of his heel. Whoever betrays Christ, or his truths, or ways, it is Satan that puts them upon it. It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom by the power of its open enemies, or by the treachery of its pretended friends; nay, without the latter its enemies could not gain their point as they do. When you see Judas communing with the chief priests, it is for no good they are consulting. The issue is, that Judas will betray Christ to them, in the absence of the multitude.

§ 121, 122. Ver. 7-18. *The passover.*

Christ observed the ordinances of the law, particularly that of the passover, to teach us to observe his gospel institutions, particularly that of the Lord's supper, and not to neglect them. He directed those whom he employed, whither they should

go; and he directed them, so as to teach them to depend upon the conduct of Providence. Those who go upon Christ's word, need not fear a disappointment. According to the orders given them, they got all ready for the passover.

It is possible that they whose hearts are filled with wickedness, may yet be found in the plausible performance of religious services. While it does not break out, such cannot be denied the external privileges of their external profession. Though Judas has already been guilty of treason, yet, it not being publicly known, Christ admits him to sit down with the rest at the passover.

Christ bids this passover welcome, to teach us in like manner to welcome his passover, the Lord's supper. "With desire I have desired, I have most earnestly desired, to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He desired it, though he knew his sufferings would follow, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He delighted to do even this part of the will of God concerning him as Mediator. Shall we be backward to any service for him? He was now about to leave his disciples, but was very desirous to eat this passover with them before he suffered. Our gospel passover, eaten by faith with Jesus Christ, will be excellent preparation for sufferings, and trials, and death itself.

Christ takes his leave of all passovers, thereby signifying his abrogating of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which that of the passover was one of the earliest and most eminent. That type and shadow was laid aside, because now in the kingdom of God, the substance was come, which superseded them. The Lord's supper was an ordinance of the gospel kingdom, in which the passover had its accomplishment; and which the disciples, after the pouring out of the Spirit, frequently celebrated, as we find in the Acts. But the complete accomplishment of that commemoration of deliverance, will be in the kingdom of glory, when all God's spiritual Israel shall be released from the bondage of death and sin, and be put in possession of the land of promise.

What Christ had said of his eating of the paschal-lamb, he repeated concerning his drinking the cup of blessing, or thanksgiving. Take this, and divide it among yourselves. I will not drink of the fruit of the vine any more, till the kingdom of

God shall come; till the typical meaning was fulfilled in the atoning sacrifice, in the clear revelation of his gospel, and the establishment of his spiritual kingdom. The kingdom of God is now near, Christ's death opened it to all believers.

§ 126, 128. Ver. 19, 20. *The Lord's Supper instituted.*

The passover and the deliverance out of Egypt were typical and prophetic signs of a Christ to come, who should, by dying, deliver us from sin and death, and the tyranny of Satan; but the greater deliverance shall eclipse the lustre of the lesser. Therefore the Lord's supper is instituted to be a commemorative sign or memorial of a Christ already come, who by dying delivered us; his death is in special manner set before us in that ordinance.

The breaking of Christ's body as a sacrifice for us, is here commemorated by the breaking of bread; This is my body which is given for you. We are to apply it to ourselves, and to take the benefit and comfort. This bread that was given for us, is given to us to be food to our souls, for nothing can be more nourishing and satisfying to our souls than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of our interest in that atonement. This bread that was broken and given for us, to satisfy for the guilt of our sins, is broken and given to us, to satisfy the desire of our souls. And this we do in remembrance of what He did for us, when He died for us, and for a memorial of what we do, in joining to him in an everlasting covenant.

The shedding of Christ's blood, by which the atonement was made, (for the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11,) is commemorated, as represented by the wine in the cup. And that cup of wine is a sign and token of the new testament, or new covenant, made with us. It commemorates the purchase of the covenant by the blood of Christ, and confirms the promises of the covenant, which are all yea and amen in him. This will be reviving and refreshing to our souls, as wine that makes glad the heart. In all our commemorations of the shedding of Christ's blood, we must look to it as shed for us. We needed it, we take hold of it, we hope to have benefit by it; "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." In all our regards to the new testament, we must look to the blood of Christ, which seals to us all the promises of it.

§ 122, 125. Ver. 21—38. *Christ admonishes the disciples.*

The immediate coming of the kingdom of God seemed to be implied in what Christ had spoken. The same ambition worked in the hearts of the disciples as on a former occasion, and he used the same arguments to repress it. Many of the Syrian and Egyptian kings had assumed the title of "benefactors," though it was in reality a reproach to them, and the apostles were not to claim this title by assuming state or exercising dominion, but to be benefactors by stooping to the lowest services by which they could do good to others. He seems here also to refer to his washing their feet, see John 13. He animated them with the prospect of honour worthy of their desires. How unbecoming is the worldly ambition of being the greatest, to the character of a follower of Jesus, who took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to the death of the cross. Let us become benefactors indeed, by being servants to all men for Christ's sake, and after his example; nor is any to aspire after other preeminence in his kingdom, than what springs from humility and usefulness.

In the way to eternal happiness we must expect to be assaulted and sifted by Satan. If he cannot destroy, he will endeavour to disgrace or distress us. The Lord may see good to allow Satan to harass and even to baffle us, that he may prove, humble, and sanctify us, and show us the power of his grace in making us at length more than conquerors. It is not owing to our own wisdom and strength that we are not finally overcome, but to the intercession of our heavenly Advocate, who prayeth for his people as he doth not for the world, therefore their faith fails not. Though it seems to be dead, it revives again, though they fall, they are not utterly cast down, for they again look to the Lord, and he restores their souls. If we have any acquaintance with this conflict, and have been recovered, and as it were converted again, we shall desire to strengthen our brethren; to caution and encourage the weak and tempted; and to restore in the spirit of meekness, such as have been overtaken in a fault.

But nothing more certainly forebodes a fall in a professed follower of Christ, than self-confidence connected with disregard to warnings, and contempt of danger. Unless we watch and pray always,



we may be drawn in the course of the day into things we were in the morning most resolved against. Our experience of the Lord's faithfulness and goodness should animate us to trust his providence and grace for the future, but we should not presume to rush needlessly into danger; and we may expect that as our faith is strengthened it will be more sharply tried.

The troubles that were now coming upon the disciples, were sifting, would try what there was in them. Satan desired to sift them by his temptations, and endeavoured by these troubles to draw them into sin; to shake out the wheat, and leave nothing but the chaff. Observe, Satan could not sift them unless God gave him leave; he begged of God for permission to try and tempt Job. He hath challenged you, has undertaken to prove you hypocrites, and Peter especially.

If they were left to themselves, they would fail; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The intercession of Christ is not only general, for all that believe, but for particular believers. "I have prayed for thee," which is an encouragement for us to pray for ourselves, and an engagement upon us to pray for others.

Christ appeals to the disciples concerning what had been; he would teach them to depend upon Providence, and, under that, upon their friends. Yet he will have them own that they had lacked nothing; and they readily acknowledged it. It is good often to review the providences of God, and to observe how we have got through straits and difficulties. The disciples owned, to their Master's honour, that they had wanted nothing.

He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching. It may be the comfort of suffering christians, as it was of a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and will shortly end in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and will end well, everlastingly well.

They must therefore expect troubles. They must now in some degree suffer with their Master; and, when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. They must not now expect that their friends would be kind to them as they had been; and therefore, He that has a purse, let him take it, for he may have occasion for it. They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them

than they had been, and they would need weapons. At that time the apostles understood Christ literally, but he spake only of the weapons of the spiritual warfare. The sword of the Spirit is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind, 1 Pet. 4. 1; arm ourselves with expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with holy resignation to the will of God, that there may be no contradiction in us to it. Then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples inquire and find they had two swords. How little Christ would have them depend upon these, he intimates when he saith, It is enough. Two swords among twelve men, when enemies are coming in great multitudes, and every one a sword! Yet two are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the Shield of their help and the Sword of their excellency, Deut. 33. 29.

31. The plural 'you,' proves that these words were not addressed to Peter alone. Satan had already got one, Judas; he had nearly got another, Peter; and he wished to have all.—*A. Clarke.*

§ 131. Ver. 39—46. *Christ's agony in the garden.*

Christ afflicted his own soul with grief for the sin he was to satisfy for, and by tasting the wrath of God to which man had by sin made himself obnoxious. In it Christ entered the list with the powers of darkness, gave them all advantages, and yet conquered.

Doubtless, when our Lord entered the garden, he could discern those hosts of spiritual enemies, who, unseen to mortal eye, unknown to mortal apprehension, were thronging the midnight air, waiting the appointed time, when they might struggle with the second Adam, as they had once, alas, too successfully assailed the first! That time had now arrived. This is your hour, said our Lord to the conspirators when they arrived, and the power of darkness. Every description which the evangelists give of the state of mind in which our Lord entered upon the conflict, prove the tremendous nature of the assault, and the vivid and perfect anticipation of its terrors, which possessed the meek and lowly Jesus.—(8.)

Here are three things which we had not in the other evangelists. 1. When Christ was in his agony, there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthen-

ing him. The appearance of a holy angel, when Christ was weighed down with the feeling of Divine wrath against our sins, intimated approaching victory. It was a part of his humiliation, and an instance of his condescension, that he was thus strengthened by a ministering spirit, when all the angels of God worshipped him, but it became him in all things to be like unto his brethren. 2. Being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. As his sorrow and trouble increased upon him, he became more importunate in prayer. Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable when we are in an agony; and the stronger our agonies are, the more lively and frequent our prayers should be. Now it was that Christ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, Heb. 5. 7. Let us pray fervently that we may not enter into temptation; that we may either be preserved from the severer trials, or under them be enabled to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." 3. In this agony his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down. Sweat came in with sin, and was a branch of the curse: see Gen. 3. 19. When Christ was made sin and a curse for us, he underwent a grievous sweat, that in the sweat of his face we might eat the bread of life, and that he might sanctify and sweeten all our trials to us. This showed the travail of his soul. He was abroad in the open air, in a cool season, upon the cold ground, far in the night, yet he breaks out into a sweat, which speaks the extremity of agony. When we contemplate the Redeemer in agony, praying more earnestly, and his sweat like great drops of blood falling to the ground, while he was bruised for our iniquities, we should pray also to be enabled to resist unto blood, striving against sin, if ever called to it.

While we with thankfulness take the cup of salvation, and rejoice in the loving kindness of the Lord, let us never forget the cup of wrath which our Redeemer drank to the very dregs for the remission of our sins. If we were not indeed drowsy in spiritual things, we could never read or meditate on what passed in Gethsemane without being deeply affected, and remembering much that might profit us.

One drop of this cup would bear down thy soul to endless ruin; and these agonies would annihilate the universe.—(11.)

Behold the incarnate Son of God, the holy, undefiled, and well-beloved of the Father, in whom he was well pleased, view him thus prostrate on the earth, exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, sweating great drops of blood, rolling to the ground, and say whether he was not then enduring the wrath and tremendous frown of God, as our surety and the sacrifice for our sins. Let the careless and impenitent ask themselves, Did God's own hand inflict these strokes on his beloved Son, who was more valued by him than the whole creation, and will he spare a rebel, an enemy, who takes encouragement to sin from persuasion that he is merciful? Vain and destructive presumption.

Reader! when next you dwell in imagination upon the delights of some favourite sin, think of its effects as you behold them here! Let your answer to Satan be, I have now seen sin in all its deformity and terror. I have seen its fearful effects in the garden of Gethsemane, and I desire, by the help of my God, never again to look even with a momentary complacency, or to enter into a momentary alliance with that enemy, to ransom me from whom the Redeemer thus prayed, agonized, and bled.—(8.)

44. *Mend* observes from Galen, that cases sometimes happen in which, through mental pressure, the pores may be so dilated that the blood may issue from them, so that there may be a bloody sweat. *De Thou* mentions such a case arising from the fear of death. This apprehension could not exist in our Lord, his mental agony and its consequence arose from other and far more important causes.

§ 132. Ver. 47-53. *Christ betrayed.*

Luke notices the question Christ asked Judas, which we have not in the other evangelists; Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Is that the signal? As if any thing could be concealed from him. Must one of his own disciples betray him, as if he had been a hard Master to them, or deserved ill at their hands? Must he be betrayed with a kiss? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery? Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed by those that profess relation to him, and affection for him. Those do so who, under pretence of zeal for his honour, persecute his servants; those also who, under the cloak of seeming affection for the honour of free grace, give a blow to the root of

holiness. Many instances there are of Christ's being betrayed with a kiss by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. It were well if their own consciences would put this question to them, Will he not resent it?

When the disciples saw that those armed men were come to seize him, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? They asked the question as if they would not have drawn the sword without commission from their Master, but they were in too much haste to stay for an answer. Christ cured the wound of Malchus, giving proof of his power, and of his mercy and goodness. Christ here gave an illustrious example of his own rule of doing good to them that hate us, as afterward he did of praying for them that despitefully use us. Corrupt nature warps our conduct to extremes; we should wait for the Lord's direction before we act in difficult circumstances. He will prevent fatal consequences from our errors, provided our hearts are upright. Yet when we contrast his temper with our own, we shall see much to admire in the one, and much to be ashamed of in the other. But neither the displays of his love nor of his power, can soften hardened unbelievers. Such men could treat the Saviour as a thief and a robber, even when working his miracles before their eyes, and healing their wounds.

Christ expostulated with the officers that came to apprehend him; they were retainers to the temple, who were employed in this odious piece of service; and some of the first rank among them. Before his hour was come it was folly for them to think to take him; and when his hour was come, it was folly for them to make all this ado to take him.

He reconciles himself to their proceedings; But this is your hour, and the power of darkness. I submit, for this is the hour allowed you to have your will against me. Now is the power of darkness; Satan, ruler of the darkness of this world, is permitted to do his worst, to bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman, and I acquiesce; let him do his worst. Let this quiet us under the prevalence of the enemies of the church, let it quiet us in a dying hour, that it is but an hour which is permitted for the triumph of our adversary, a short time, a limited time. It is their hour, which is appointed them, and in which they are permitted to try their

strength, that Omnipotence may be the more glorified in their fall. It is the power of darkness, and darkness must give way to light, and the power of darkness be made to yield to the Prince of light. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be so too. But their hour, and the power of darkness, was of short continuance, and such the triumphs of the wicked always will be. To whatever part of the scene before us we turn our thoughts, we shall see proofs of the Redeemer's excellency, and of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart of man.

§ 133. Ver. 54—62. *The fall of Peter.*

We have here the melancholy account of Peter's denying his Master when arraigned before the high priest.

He followed Christ when he was led away prisoner—that showed concern for his Master; but he followed afar off, out of danger. His fall was disclaiming acquaintance with Christ, and relation to him; disowning him because he was now in distress and danger. He that has once told a lie, is strongly tempted to persist in it; the beginning of that sin is as the letting forth of water. Peter not only denied that he was a disciple of Christ, but that he knew any thing of him. But see how happily he recovered himself, or rather how the grace of God recovered him. The cock crew as he was the third time denying that he knew Christ; this startled him, and put him upon thinking. Small circumstances may have great influences.

The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. This we had not in the other evangelists, and it is very remarkable. Christ is here called the Lord; there was very much of Divine knowledge, power, and grace, appearing in this. Christ takes more notice of what we say and do than we think he does. When Peter disowned Christ, yet Christ did not disown him, though he might justly have cast him off, and never looked upon him more. It is well for us that Christ does not deal with us as we deal with him. Christ looked upon Peter; he knew that though he had denied him with his lips, yet his eye would still be toward him. 1. It was a *convincing* look. Peter said that he did not know Christ. Christ turned and looked upon him, as if he should say, Dost thou not know me, Peter? 2. It was a *chiding* look. We may

suppose that he some way signified his displeasure. Let us think with what an angry countenance Christ justly looks upon us when we have sinned. 3. It was an *expostulating* look—What, Peter, art thou he that disownest me now, when thou shoulddest come and witness for me! Thou who wast the most forward to confess me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldst never disown me? 4. It was a *compassionate* look. He looked upon him with tenderness; Peter, how weak is thine heart! how art thou fallen and undone if I do not help thee! 5. It was a *directing* look, to retire and bethink himself, and then he would soon see what he had to do. 6. It was a *significant* look; it signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart, to enable him to repent. The crowing of the cock would not have brought him to repentance without this look, nor will any external means without special efficacious grace. Power went along with this look, to change the heart of Peter, and to bring him to himself, to his right mind.

Peter remembered the words of the Lord. The grace of God works in and by the word of God, brings that to mind, and sets that home upon the conscience, and so gives the soul the happy turn.

Then Peter went out and wept bitterly. One look from Christ melted him into tears of godly sorrow for sin. The candle was newly put out, and then a little lights it again. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as he did on Peter, who had the Divine seed remaining in him to work upon. It was not the look from Christ, but it was the Divine grace with it, that recovered Peter.

He no longer remained among the enemies of his Lord; he instantly forsook a scene of so much temptation, and to him of so much sin. We are not again told that he continued warming himself in the high priest's palace, or waiting to see the end. That single glance of power from the eye of the Redeemer drove Satan from his prey, and dissolved the chains he had wound about his captive; the snare was broken, and he was delivered. Those really earnest in their penitence, will immediately and for ever forsake those scenes, and those habits, and those companions that have induced them to deny their Lord. Worlds would not tempt you back to tread that path of danger from

which, by the preventing grace of God, you have been mercifully extricated. And let not the assurance of the Saviour's pardon diminish the tide of the sinner's tears; be willing, with a broken and contrite heart, now to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and the word of God is pledged that you shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.—(8.)

When we behold the Redeemer looking with compassion on his fallen disciple, may we be excited to call our sins to remembrance, and to renew that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.

§ 134. Ver. 63—71. *Christ confesses himself to be the Son of God.*

We are here told, as in the other gospels, how our Lord Jesus was abused by the servants of the high priest. He bore every thing; hell was let loose, and he suffered it to do its worst. Greater indignities could not be done to the blessed Jesus, yet many things blasphemously spake they against him. They that condemned him for a blasphemer, were the vilest blasphemers.

He was accused and condemned by the great sanhedrim. They ask him, Art thou the Christ? He was generally believed by his followers to be the Christ, but his enemies could not prove that he had ever said so, and therefore urge him to own it. He justly complained of their unjust usage. They all, as Jews, professed to expect the Messiah, and to expect him at this time; he had no competitor, nor was he likely to have any; he had given amazing proofs of Divine power; it had been but just for these leaders of the people, to examine whether he was so, or not. But, saith he, if I tell you that I am the Christ, and give you convincing proofs of it, you are resolved that you will not believe. If I ask you what you have to object against the proofs I produce, you will not answer me. Here he refers to their silence when he put a question to them, which should have led them to own his authority, ch. 20. 5, 7. He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their confusion, since they would not now admit the proof of it to their conviction.

Hence they inferred that he asserted he was the Son of God, and asked him whether he were so or not. He called himself the Son of man, referring to

Daniel's vision of the Son of man, Dan. 7. 13, 14. But they knew that if he was that Son of man, he was also the Son of God. By this it appears to have been the faith of the Jewish church, that the Messiah should be both the Son of man, and Son of God. He owns himself to be the Son of God. Ye say that I am; that is, I am, as ye say. Compare Mark 14. 62, Jesus said, I am. This confirms Christ's testimony concerning himself, that he was the Son of God, when he knew he should suffer for it. Upon this they ground his condemnation. It was true, they needed not any further witness to prove that he said he was the Son of God, they had it from his own mouth; but they needed proof that he was not so, before they condemned him as a blasphemer. Had they no apprehension that it was possible he might be so? and then what horrid guilt they would bring upon themselves! No, they know not, neither will they understand. They cannot think it possible that he should be the Messiah, though evidently clothed with Divine power and grace, if he appear not, as they expect, in worldly pomp and grandeur. Their eyes being blinded, they rush on.

And how shocking for men to interrogate Christ concerning his doctrine, person, and work, only to strengthen their own prejudices, and those of others against him. But soon will he appear in great glory to the confusion of every unbeliever, and to the unspeakable comfort of every true believer.—(10.)

Let us meditate on this amazing transaction. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. While we view with terror the obstinate malignant rage of his enemies, let us admire and praise the condescensions of his love. He endured the vilest indignities from those whom he might have consigned to destruction. Let us learn from him to take it patiently whenever we endure grief, suffering wrongfully, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.—(60.)

70. Ye say that I am, and, Ye have said, are terms of the same import in the Jewish phraseology, with saying, I am. So Christ hereby plainly declared himself to be in truth the Son of God.—*Guyse*.

For particulars connected with the celebration of the passover and the institution of the last supper, see general note.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

V. 1—56. M. 27. 1—61. Mk. 15. 1—47. J. 18. 28—40. J. 19. 1—41.

§ 125. Ver. 1—5. *Christ before Pilate.*

Our Lord Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer by the priests, but when they had condemned him, they could not put him to death, and therefore they accuse him before Pilate, and demand justice against him, not as a blasphemer, but as one disaffected to the Roman government, which they in their hearts did not look upon as any crime, but it answered the purpose of their malice. Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews? To which he answered, Thou sayest it; that is, It is as thou sayest, I am entitled to the government of the Jewish nation; but Christ's kingdom is wholly spiritual, and will not interfere with Cesar's jurisdiction.

Pilate well understood the difference between armed forces, such as those of the impostors who had before that risen in Galilee, and our Lord's inoffensive followers, who were only formidable to the hypocritical scribes and pharisees. Pilate said to the chief priests, and to the people that seemed to join with them, I find no fault in this man. What breaches of your law he may have been guilty of, I am not concerned to inquire; but I find nothing proved upon him, that makes him obnoxious to us. Instead of being moderated by Pilate's declaration of his innocency, and considering whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, they were the more exasperated.

The Lord conducts his designs to a glorious issue, even by means of those who are following the devices of their own hearts. Thus all parties concurred, so as to prove the innocence of Jesus, the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

§ 136. Ver. 6—12. *Christ before Herod.*

The accusers mentioned Galilee the northern part of Canaan. Send him to Herod then, saith Pilate, since he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate was desirous to rid his hands of the matter. But God ordered it so for the more evident fulfilling of the scripture. Acts 4. 26, 27, and Ps. 2. 2; The kings of the earth and the rulers set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed, was fulfilled in Herod and Pontius Pilate.

Herod had heard many things of Jesus in Galilee, and longed to see him, for

curiosity; he hoped also to have seen some miracle done by him. In order to this, he questioned Jesus in many things, that he might bring him to something in which he might show his power. But Jesus answered him nothing, nor would he gratify him. The poorest beggar, that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was never denied; but this proud prince, who asked a miracle merely for gratifying his curiosity, is refused. He might have seen Christ and his wondrous works in Galilee, and would not, therefore it is justly said, Now he would see them, and shall not. Our Lord would take no notice of a man who had committed such wickednesses, in opposition to his own conscience.

Christ's prosecutors stood, and vehemently accused him. Herod, with his men of war, his attendants and officers, and great men, set him at nought. They made nothing of him; so the word is. They laughed at him as one that had lost his power. Herod, who had been acquainted with John Baptist, and had more knowledge of Christ than Pilate, was more abusive to Christ: for knowledge without grace, does but make men the more ingeniously wicked. Herod returned him to Pilate, and this intercourse brought them to a better understanding than there had been of late between them. The friendships of wicked men are often formed by uniting in wickedness. Frequently they agree in little, except in enmity to God, and contempt of Christ.

6. 12. The Galileans are often mentioned by *Josephus* as a turbulent people, and as always ready to oppose the Roman authority. Pilate appears to have been prejudiced against that people, and when Jesus was brought before him, accused of exciting the Jews to revolt, he asks, Art thou a Galilean? See also note, ch. 13. 1.

§ 137, 138. Ver. 13-25. *Barabbas preferred to Christ.*

Pilate solemnly protests that he believes Christ has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. He ought immediately to have discharged him, and to have protected him from the fury of the priests and rabble. But, being a bad man, he had no kindness for Christ: and having made himself otherwise obnoxious, he was afraid of displeasing either the emperor or the Jews; and therefore, for want of integrity, he called together the chief priests, and rulers, and people.

He appeals to Herod concerning him; who is supposed to have known more of

him, and has laughed at him as a weak man, but did not stigmatize him as a dangerous man. Herod's concurrence with Pilate seemed to the latter to be of weight, as he was well acquainted with the customs and religion of the Jews.

Pilate proposes to release Jesus, if they will consent. The fear of man brings many into this snare, that they will do an unjust thing against their consciences, rather than get into trouble. Pilate declares him innocent, and has a mind to release him; yet, to please the people, he will release him under the notion of a malefactor. He will chastise him, and release him. If no fault be found in him, why chastise him?

The people choose rather to have Barabbas released; a wretched character, a murderer, of all crimes among men the least pardonable, yet this criminal was preferred before Christ!

When Pilate urged the second time, that Christ should be released, they cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. When he the third time reasoned with them, to show them the unreasonableness and injustice of it, they were the more peremptory and outrageous. Pilate yielded, at length, to their importunity. He had not courage to go against so strong a stream, but gave sentence that it should be as they required. He delivered Jesus to their will; and he could not act more barbarously than to deliver him to the will of those who hated him, and whose tender mercies were cruelty.

15. "Is done by him."—*Scholefield.*

§ 140. Ver. 26-31. *Christ speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem.*

We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice. Observe how quickly they hurried this forward. He was brought before the chief priests at break of day, after that to Pilate, then to Herod, then to Pilate again; and there was a struggle between Pilate and the people about him. He was scourged, crowned with thorns, contumeliously used; all this was done in a few hours, for he was crucified between nine o'clock and twelve. As they led him to death a bearer was found that carried his cross, Simon, a Cyrenian; probably a friend of Christ.

A great company followed him, especially women. Though many reproached and reviled him, yet some pitied him,

The dying of the Lord Jesus may perhaps move natural affections in many who are strangers to devout affections ; many bewail Christ, who do not believe in him ; and lament him, who do not love him above all. Christ turned to them, and bid them not weep for him, but for themselves, and for their children, with reference to the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem, which some of them might live to see, and share in the calamities of it, or, at least, their children would. We must not be affected with the death of Christ as with the death of a common person whose calamity we pity, or of a common friend whom we are likely to part with ; the death of Christ was peculiar, it was his victory and triumph over his enemies, it was our deliverance, the purchase of eternal life for us. Therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, which caused his death ; and weep for fear of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves, if we slight his love, and reject his grace, as the Jewish nation did, which brought upon them the ruin here foretold. When our dear relations and friends die in Christ, we have no reason to weep for those who are made perfect in holiness, and are entered into perfect rest and joy, but for ourselves and our children, who are left behind in a world of sins, and sorrows, and snares.

He gives them a particular reason why they should weep for themselves and for their children. When Christ's own disciples sorrowed after a godly sort for his leaving them, he wiped away their tears with the promise that he would see them again, and they should rejoice, John 16. 22. But when these daughters of Jerusalem bewailed him only with worldly sorrow, he told them to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, James 4. 9. Let the daughters of Zion, that own Christ for their King, rejoice in him, for he comes to save them ; but let the daughters of Jerusalem, who only weep for him, and take him not for their King, weep and tremble to think of his coming to judge them.

The destruction of Jerusalem is here foretold by two proverbial sayings, which both bespeak it very terrible. They would wish to be written childless. This was esteemed one of the greatest afflictions by the Jewish women. They shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to

the hills, Cover us. This also refers to a passage in the same prophecy with the former, Hosea 10. 8. Those who would not flee to Christ for refuge, and put themselves under his protection, will in vain call to hills and mountains to shelter them from his wrath.

He shows how natural it was to infer that desolation from his sufferings. These words may be applied particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and the Jews, by putting him to death, brought upon themselves. If they thus abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for so doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing ! If this be their sin, what will be their punishment ? Or if the Romans inflicted such sufferings on him who was so innocent, what would they do to that nation, as the executioners of God's vengeance, when they filled the measure of their iniquities ?

These words may be applied generally to all the revelations of God's wrath against sin and sinners ; If God deliver him up to such sufferings as these, because he is made a sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves ? If God did this to the Son of his love, when he found but sin imputed to him, what shall he do to the generation of his wrath, when he finds sin reigning in them ? The consideration of the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus should engage us to stand in awe of the justice of God. The best saints, compared with Christ, are dry trees ; if he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer ? And what then shall the damnation of sinners be ? Even the sufferings of Christ preach terror to obstinate transgressors.

§ 140, 141. Ver. 32-43. *The crucifixion—The repentant malefactor.*

In these verses we have divers passages which we had before in Matthew and Mark, concerning Christ's sufferings. But here are two passages we had not before, and they are very remarkable.

1. Christ's prayer for his enemies ; Father, forgive them. Seven remarkable words Christ spake after he was nailed to the cross, and this is the first. As soon as he was fastened to the cross, he prayed this prayer. Now he made intercession for transgressors, as was foretold, Isa. 53. 12. Not only these, but all that

shall repent and believe the gospel. Father, I am now suffering and dying that poor sinners may be pardoned. The great thing which Christ died to purchase and procure for us, is the forgiveness of sin. This Christ intercedes for. The greatest sinners may, through Christ, upon repentance, find mercy. The crucifiers of Christ know not what they do. They that speak ill of religion, speak ill they know not of what, and because they will not know it. Such are to be pitied and prayed for. If Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enemies can we have, whom we are not obliged to love and pray for?

2. The conversion of the thief upon the cross. Christ was crucified between two thieves; in them were represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men in the preaching of the gospel. Men are all malefactors, all guilty before God. Now the cross of Christ is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Here was one of these malefactors hardened to the last. No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they irritate the corruption which, it might be thought, they should mortify. He challenges Christ to save both himself and them. Some rail upon Christ, and yet have the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and conclude that, if he do not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour. The other was softened at the last. It is said in Matthew and Mark, that they who were crucified with him, reviled him. Some think that they both reviled him at first, till the heart of one of them was wonderfully changed. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of Divine mercy. This gives no encouragement to any to put off repentance to their death-bed, or to hope that they shall then find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure he cannot have the advantages this penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. This man was made a singular instance of the power of Christ's grace, at the time when he was crucified in weakness. Christ having conquered

Satan in the destruction of Judas, and the preservation of Peter, gave further proof of his victory over him in the conversion of this malefactor.

We shall see the case to be extraordinary, if we observe the extraordinary operations of God's grace upon him. Here were so many evidences given in a short time of a blessed change wrought in him, that more could not have been in so little a compass.

See what he said to the other malefactor. 1. He reproveth him for railing on Christ. All that have their eyes opened, see this to be at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. 2. He owns that he deserved what was done to him. He does not say, Thou indeed justly, but, We. True penitents acknowledge the justice of God in all the punishments of their sins. 3. He believes Christ to have suffered wrongfully. Whether he had before heard of Christ and of his wondrous works, does not appear, but the Spirit of grace enlightened him with this knowledge, and enabled him to say, This man has done nothing amiss.

See what he said to our Lord Jesus; Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. This is the prayer of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. While there is life there is hope; and while there is hope, there is room for prayer. 1. Observe his faith in this prayer. In his confession of sin, he discovered repentance toward God, ver. 40. In this petition he discovered faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was now in the depth of disgrace, deserted by his own disciples, reviled by his own nation, suffering as a deceiver, and not delivered by his Father. He made this profession before the prodigies happened which put honour upon Christ's sufferings, and startled the centurion. He believed in a life to come after this, and desired to be happy in that life, not as the other thief, to be saved from the cross. 2. Observe his humility in this prayer. All his request is, Lord, remember me; referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him. 3. There is importunity and fervency in this prayer. To be remembered by Christ, now he is in his kingdom, is what we should earnestly desire and pray for, and it will be enough to secure our welfare, living and dying. Thus he was humbled in true repentance. He believed on Jesus in his



heart, unto righteousness, and he made confession of him with his mouth, unto salvation. He brought forth all the fruits meet for repentance his circumstances would admit. There evidently was in him the substance of all christian graces.

Jesus said unto him, in answer to his prayer, "Verily I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise," ver. 43. Observe, 1. *To whom* this was spoken: to the penitent thief, to him, and not to his companion. Christ upon the cross is like Christ upon the throne. Though now himself in the greatest struggle and agony, yet he had a word of comfort to a poor penitent that committed himself to him. Even great sinners, if true penitents, shall, through Christ, obtain not only the pardon of their sins, but a place in the paradise of God, Heb. 9. 15. 2. *By whom* this was spoken. This was another mediatorial word which Christ spake; as he died to purchase the forgiveness of sins for us, so also to purchase eternal life for us. By this word we are given to understand that Jesus Christ died to open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers. By this he assures us that his satisfaction was accepted, and the Father was well pleased in him: that was the beginning of the joy set before him, which he comforted himself with the prospect of. He lets all penitent believers know that when they die they shall then go to be with him. In the second Adam we are restored to all we lost in the first Adam, and more—to a heavenly paradise instead of an earthly one. The happiness of heaven is to see Christ, and share in his glory, John 17. 24. It is immediate upon death; This day shalt thou be with me; the souls of the faithful, when delivered from the burden of the flesh, immediately are in joy and felicity; the spirits of just men are immediately made perfect.

This doubtless was the grand display of the Redeemer's power and grace in the view of numberless invisible spectators, and to instruct mankind in the freeness and sovereignty of his mercy.

May the Redeemer's prayer be heard for our souls; for we too were concerned in crucifying the Lord of glory, though we knew not what we did. But let every one fear crucifying him afresh, by continuing in sin, in contempt of his salvation. A change of nature is evidence of a happy change in state. Monuments of mercy

will become reprovers or counsellors to former companions in iniquity; they will confess Christ before men. They will humbly apply to and rely on him for deliverance from the wrath to come, and for the blessings of his kingdom; they will honour and obey him. Such repenting sinners Jesus will make partakers of his salvation; he will support them in the agonies of death, and immediately receive them to glory. Even should their departure be by execution for crimes previously committed, that shall not prevent their joyful entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us not attempt to darken such displays of the Redeemer's sovereign grace for fear lest men should abuse them, and thence be emboldened to continue in sin. Such instances doubtless there are in every age, but such changes are very rare. Most who live strangers to religion, give at best but feeble hopes to discerning ministers of Christ; while many, like the hardened thief, depart, either despising the Saviour or despairing of mercy. The awful instances of this kind which we hear of, would effectually prevent the hateful delusion of sinning on, under the idea of a death-bed repentance, if the god of this world did not blind the minds of unbelievers. It is a single instance in scripture—it should indeed teach us to despair of none, and that none should despair of themselves; but lest it should be abused, it is contrasted with the awful state of the other thief, who died hardened in unbelief, though also with a crucified Saviour before his eyes. Be assured that in general men die as they live.

42. "When thou comest in thy kingdom."—*Schulefield.*

§ 141, 142. Ver. 44—49. *The death of Christ.*

We have here the death of Christ magnified by the wonders that attended it, and his death explained by the words with which he breathed out his soul. Jesus had cried, Why hast thou forsaken me? and he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. He used David's words, to show it was the Spirit of Christ which testified in the old testament prophets, and that he came to fulfil the scripture. Thus he directs us to use scripture language in our prayers. When he complained of being forsaken, he cried, My God, my God; but now the dreadful agony of his soul was over, he calls God

Father. Christ used these words in a sense peculiar to himself as Mediator. He was now to make his soul an offering for our sin, Isa. 53. 10, to give his life a ransom for many, Matt. 20. 28, by the eternal Spirit to offer himself, Heb. 9. 14. He was himself both the Priest and the Sacrifice: our souls were forfeited, and his life must go to redeem the forfeiture. The price must be paid to God, the party offended by sin; to him he had undertaken to make full satisfaction. By these words he offered up the sacrifice. Father, accept me instead of the sinners I die for. The good will of the offerer was requisite to the acceptance of an offering. Christ here expresses his cheerful willingness to offer himself, as he had done, when it was first proposed, Heb. 10. 9, 10, Lo I come to do thy will; by the which will we are sanctified.

The centurion who commanded the guard, was much affected with what he saw. He was a Roman, a Gentile, a stranger to the consolations of Israel; yet he glorified God. He never saw such amazing instances of Divine power, and therefore adored Jehovah as the Almighty. And he bore a testimony to the patient sufferer; Certainly this was a righteous man, and was unjustly put to death.

The spectators were concerned. Perhaps some that had cried, Crucify him, and who, when he was nailed to the cross, had reviled and blasphemed him, were now terrified, and their consciences deeply startled. Alas, how many who see Christ evidently set forth crucified among them, in the word and sacraments, are a little affected for a time, but it does not continue; they smite their breasts and return! Those that knew him, and were known of him, stood afar off; this was part of his sufferings. And the women that followed him from Galilee, beheld these things, not knowing what they meant, nor ready to take them for certain pre-figures of his resurrection. But let us come to Jesus without delay, and give diligence to make our calling and election sure; approaching the throne of grace through the rent veil, through his atoning blood and prevailing intercession, that when we die we may commend our departing souls into our Father's hand, and by his light pass through that scene which to unbelievers is encompassed with darkness and horror. Let us not be content with mere acknowledgment of the Saviour, or out-

ward expressions of sorrow. Let us seek to glorify God by our repentance and conversion, by protesting against those who crucify the Saviour; by a sober, righteous, and godly life; and by employing our talents in the service of Him who died for us and rose again.

44. "Over all the land."—*Scholefield.*

47. The centurion's testimony in Matthew and Mark goes further: Truly this was the Son of God. But in his case this amounts to the same; for if Jesus was a righteous man, he said very truly when he said that he was the Son of God; and therefore that testimony of his concerning himself must be admitted, for if it were false, he was not a righteous man.—*Henry.*

§ 142. Ver. 50—56. *The burial of Christ.*

We have here Christ's burial. Joseph of Arimathea was not only just to all, but good to all that needed him. He was a member of the sanhedrim; it was necessary to add, that though of the body of men who had put Christ to death, yet he had not consented to their counsel and deed. That evil counsel and deed shall not be reckoned our act, which we have not consented to. He waited for the kingdom of God; he believed the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected their accomplishment. This man appears on this occasion to have had true respect for the Lord Jesus. Many, though they do not make any show in outward profession, yet will be more ready to do real service, when there is occasion, than others who make a greater figure and noise.

Christ was buried in a sepulchre hewn in stone, that the prison of the grave might be made strong. And it was a sepulchre in which never man before was laid. He was buried on the day of the preparation, when the sabbath drew on. This is a reason why they made such haste, because the sabbath drew on, which required their preparing and going forth to welcome it. Weeping must not hinder sowing. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they must apply to the sanctifying the sabbath. And when the sabbath draws on, there must be preparation. Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, that they may not hinder us from our sabbath-work; and our holy affections so excited, that they may carry us on in it.

None of the twelve disciples attended the funeral; but only the women that came from Galilee, ver. 55. They were led to this by their affection to the Lord Jesus.

After he was buried, they returned and prepared spices and ointments, which was more an evidence of their love than of their faith; for had they remembered and believed what Christ had so often told them, that he should rise again the third day, they would have spared their cost and pains herein, as knowing that in a short time there would be a greater honour put upon his body by the glory of his resurrection, than any they could put upon it. But, busy as they were in this preparation, they rested on the sabbath-day, according to the commandment of their God, which, though the day be altered, is still in full force; Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. In whatever business we engage, or however our hearts may be affected, let us never omit to prepare for, and keep holy the day of sacred rest, according to the command of our God and Saviour.

Our Lord's burial shows us the amazing depths of his humiliation—from what, and to what his love brought him—even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. It may comfort us against the terrors of the grave. It could not long keep Christ; it shall not always keep christians. It was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now! He whose Head is in heaven need not fear to put his feet into the grave. Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ.—(73.)

## CHAPTER XXIV.

V.1-12. M.28.1-8. Mk.16.1-8. J.20.1-10.  
V.13-26, 33. Mk.16.12, 13.  
V.36, 40. Mk.16.14. J.20.19, 20.  
V.50-52. Mk.16.19.

§ 145, 146. Ver. 1-12. *The resurrection of Christ.*

The manner of the reunion of Christ's soul and body in his resurrection, is a mystery, one of the secret things that belong not to us; but the infallible proofs of his resurrection, that he did indeed rise from the dead, and was thereby proved to be the Son of God, are things revealed.

1. We have here the affection and respect which the women showed to Christ, after he was dead and buried. As soon as they could, after the sabbath was over, they came to the sepulchre, to anoint the body, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about it. Notice is taken of the names of these women. Notice is also taken of

others who had not joined in preparing the spices, but would go with them to the sepulchre.

2. Observe their surprise when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty. Good christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.

3. They had a plain account of Christ's resurrection. The women, when they saw the angels, were afraid of ill news. They would rather find their Master in his grave-clothes, than angels in their shining garments. A dying Jesus has more beauty in the eyes of a believer than angels themselves. These women enter not into other conversation with them, than, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Cant. 3.3.

The angels asked the women; Why seek ye the living among the dead? Witness is hereby given to Christ, that he is living; of him it is witnessed, that he liveth, Heb. 7. 8, and it is the comfort of all the saints, I know that my Redeemer liveth; for because he lives we shall live also. A reproof is given to those that look for him among the dead. Many errors in religion are like seeking the living among the dead, yet those are most fatally thus employed who seek happiness from worldly vanities or in sinful pleasures; or salvation from human inventions. And indeed all that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to seek the living among the dead. The angels assure them that he is risen from the dead; is risen by his own power; they refer them to his own words. If the women had duly believed and observed the prediction, they would easily have believed the thing itself when it came to pass. Christ told them he must be crucified, surely they could not forget that! and would not that bring to their mind what always followed, The third day he shall rise again? Observe, these angels from heaven bring not any new gospel, but remind the women of Christ's sayings, and teach them how to improve and apply them.

4. The women remembered his words, when thus reminded of them. A seasonable remembrance of the words of Christ will help us to a right understanding of his providence.

5. The apostles thought this was only the fancy of the women, for they also had

forgotten Christ's words; not only what he had said to them in Galilee some time ago, but what he had said very lately in the night wherein he was betrayed, Again a little while, and ye shall see me. I will see you again. One would be amazed that these disciples, who believed Christ to be the Son of God and the true Messiah, who had been so often told that he must die, and rise again, and then enter into his glory, who had seen him more than once raise the dead, yet should be so backward to believe his raising himself. But all our mistakes in religion spring from ignorance or forgetfulness of the words Christ hath spoken.

6. Peter now ran to the sepulchre, who so lately ran from his Master. He was very particular in making his observations, and went away, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Had he remembered the words of Christ, even this was enough to satisfy him that he was risen from the dead; but having forgotten them, he is amazed. There are many things puzzling and perplexing to us which would be both plain and profitable, if we did but rightly understand the words of Christ, and had them ready to us.

10. "And the other women with them."—*Scholefield.*

12. Had the body been stolen all wrapped about, the grave clothes would have been taken away. Even if the linen had not been desired, the delay in removing it would have occasioned danger.

These angels, though created many thousand years before, were still young, and regarded by Mary and the disciples as young men, Mark 16. 5. On angels duration makes in this respect no impression. Ages roll their years away and leave them, as they found them, in the blossom of youth, which shall begin for ever. Such is the character of all the children of God beyond the grave.—*Dwight.*

§ 150. Ver. 13-27. *Christ appears to two disciples on the way to Emmaus.*

This appearance of Christ to the two disciples going to Emmaus, was mentioned, Mark 16. 12; here it is largely related. It happened the same day that Christ rose. They went to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they travelled they talked together of all those things which had happened. It well becomes the disciples of Christ to talk together of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up each other's devout affections. Jesus himself came, and joined them.

We may observe it for encouragement to keep up christian conference and edifying discourse, that were but two together are well employed in work of that kind, Christ will come to them, and make a third. They, in their communings and reasonings together, were searching for Christ, that they might get more knowledge of him: and Christ comes to them. Those who seek Christ, shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. But though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it. It should seem, there was an alteration of the object of sight, for it is said in Mark that now he appeared in another form, and their organs of sight were restrained that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him. Christ so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him.

They were sad. They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them. Though he was risen from the dead, yet either they did not know it, or did not believe it, and so they were still in sorrow. Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful, even when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them. Being sad, they had communications concerning Christ. It becomes christians to talk of Christ, and joint-mourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

Though Christ was now entered into his state of exaltation, yet he continued to be concerned for his disciples. Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions.

In answer they put a question. Cleopas spoke civilly, though he appeared a stranger. We ought to conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. He was full of Christ himself, and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too. Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem, that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ. Those who have

themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified, should do what they can to spread that knowledge. And observe, these disciples who were forward to instruct the stranger, were instructed by him.

Hence it appears that the death of Christ made great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city, as not to know of it. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

Our Lord asked concerning their knowledge. They give a summary of Christ's life and character. Many are great before all the people, and are caressed by them, who are not so before God, but Christ was mighty both in his doctrine and in his doings, before God and all the people. Those were strangers in Jerusalem, that did not know this.

Here is a narrative of his sufferings, ver. 20, and an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness. They trusted it had been he that should have redeemed Israel. And is it not He that doth redeem Israel? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? So that now they had more reason than ever to trust that this is he that shall deliver Israel. They own there was a report that he was risen, but they speak of it slightly.

Our Lord Jesus reproves them for the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament; Christ knows our foolishness, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. They are fools that act against their own interest; so they did who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their foolishness, is their slowness to believe; their slowness to believe the writings of the prophets; for if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament due consideration, they would have been sure of Christ's rising. Were we more conversant with the scripture, and the Divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we often entangle ourselves in.

He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which made them unfit to believe his glory, were really the appointed way

to his glory. The cross of Christ was that which they could not reconcile themselves to; now here he shows them two things which take off the offence of the cross, 1. That the Messiah ought to suffer these things; and, therefore, his sufferings were a proof of his being the Messiah as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship. He could not have been a Saviour if he had not been a Sufferer; having undertaken our salvation, it was necessary that he should suffer and die. 2. That, when he had suffered these things, he should enter into his glory, which he did at his resurrection. It is called his glory; it was the glory he had before the world was; in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He ought to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; thus the reproach of the cross is for ever rolled away. We are directed to expect the crown of thorns, and then that of glory.

Beginning at Moses, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, Jesus expounded to them the things concerning himself; showing that the sufferings he had now gone through were the accomplishment of the prophecies. He began at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have his heel bruised, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken. There are many passages dispersed throughout all the scriptures concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to collect and put together. We cannot go far in any part of scripture but we meet with something that has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other; for he is the true Treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament. A golden thread of gospel grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the best expositor of scripture, and even after his resurrection, it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions of the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them to the earnest study of it. In studying the scriptures, it is good to take them in order; to observe how at sundry times, and in divers manners, subsequent predictions improving and giving light to the preceding ones, God spake to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom

he has now spoken to us. Christ has here taught us to begin at Moses.

Though it has not pleased God to give us this expository sermon of Christ, yet his Spirit, by his apostles, has given us enough for our use.—(3.)

27. The principal prophecies relating to the sufferings and resurrection of our Lord are Gen. 3. 15; 22. 2, 4; Exod. 12. 14—17; Is. 53. Dan. 9. 26; Jonah 1. 17; Zech. 9. 9; 13. 7; Ps. 2. 1—3; 22. 1—18; 16. 10. Many others might be pointed out, as also having reference to Christ, as, Gen. 49. 10; Num. 21. 6—9; Deut. 18. 15; Ps. 132. 11. Is. 7. 14; 9. 6, 7; 40. 10, 11; 50. 6; 52. 13, 14; Jer. 23. 5, 6; 33. 14, 15. Ezek. 34. 23; Mic. 5. 2; Zech. 12. 10; Mal. 3. 1—3; 4. 2. See also a list at the end of the Old Testament.

§ 150. Ver. 28—35. *Christ makes himself known to the two disciples.*

Christ at length made a discovery of himself to the disciples. They drew nigh to the village whither they went. And now, he would have gone further, if they had not courted his stay. Those that would have Christ dwell with them, must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is often found of those that seek him not, yet those only that seek, can be sure to find. If he seem to draw off from us, it is but to draw out our importunity; as here they constrained him. Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ, cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him not only to walk with them all day, but to abide with them at night. When the day is far spent, and it is towards evening, we begin to think of retiring for our repose; then let us look to Christ, to manifest himself to us, and fill our minds with good thoughts of him, and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity; he went in to tarry with them. Thus ready is Christ to give further instructions and comforts to those who improve what they have received. He has promised that if any man open the door, to bid him welcome, he will come in to him, Rev. 3. 20.

He manifested himself to them. We may suppose that he continued such communication as was good, and to the use of edifying. But still they little thought that it was Jesus himself who was talking with them; till, at length, he was pleased to reveal himself.

He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. This he did with his usual authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, perhaps

with the same expressions. This was a common meal; yet Christ here teaches us to keep up our communion with God in common providences as well as in special ordinances, and to crave a blessing and give thanks at every meal. Wherever we sit down to eat, let us take our meat as blessed to us by Him, and eat and drink to his glory; and receive contentedly and thankfully what he is pleased to dispense to us. Be the fare ever so coarse, we may well receive it cheerfully, if we by faith see it coming from Christ's hand, and with his blessing.

They knew him well enough; whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way. See how Christ by his Spirit and grace makes himself known to the souls of his people. 1. He opens the scriptures to them, for they are they which testify of him to those who search them; and search for him in them. 2. He meets them at his table, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and commonly there makes further discoveries of himself to them; is known to them in breaking of bread. But, 3. The work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind. If he that gives the revelation, do not give the understanding, we are in the dark still.

Christ immediately disappeared: he withdrew himself from them; or he became not visible by them. It should seem that though Christ's body, after his resurrection, was the very same body in which he suffered and died, as appeared by the marks in it, yet it became either visible or not visible, as he thought fit. As soon as he had given his disciples one glimpse of himself, he was gone presently; such short and transient views have we of Christ in this world, we see him, but in a little while lose the sight of him again; when we enter heaven, the sight of him will have no interruptions.

They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us by the way? They found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the preacher. It made things very plain to them; and brought Divine heat with Divine light into their souls, such as kindled pious and devout affections in them. This they notice, for confirming their belief that it was indeed Jesus himself who had been talking with them. For none but he, no word but his, could make their hearts so burn within. See here what preaching is likely to do

good, such as Christ's was; plain teaching, which is familiar and level to our capacity—he talked with them by the way; and scriptural preaching—he opened to them the scriptures, the scriptures relating to himself. Ministers should show people their religion in their bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine than what is there. Expounding those scriptures which speak of Christ, has direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples. That hearing is likely to do most good, which affects us with the love of Christ in dying for us, then our hearts burn within us. When our hearts are raised and fly upward toward God, and when they are kindled and carried out with holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed."

They rose up the same hour, so transported with joy at the discovery Christ had made of himself, that they returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had entertained any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this seems to have banished all such thoughts out of their minds. Now that they had seen Christ, they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for confirming their trembling faith, and for comforting their sorrowful spirits, with the same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God. It is the duty of those to whom Christ has manifested himself, to let others know what he has done for their souls. When thou art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthen thy brethren. They found the eleven and their companions together late in the night, to pray and to consider what was to be done in this juncture; and they found them saying among themselves, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. No room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared, not only to the women, but to Simon, 1. Cor. 15. 5.

They told what things were done in the way. The words spoken by Christ to them in the way, having wonderful effect and influence upon them, are here called the things that were done in the way. They told also how he was at length known to them in the breaking of bread; then God opened their eyes to discern who it was. It would be of great use for the discovery and confirmation of truth, if the disciples

of Christ would compare their observations and experiences, and communicate to each other what they know and feel in themselves.

We should hasten to make known to our sorrowing brethren those communications which gladden our hearts, that we may mutually assure each other's faith and hope.

§ 151. Ver. 36—49. *Christ appears to the disciples.*

While the disciples were discoursing, Jesus was pleased to appear in the midst of them in a miraculous manner, assuring them of his peace, his entire reconciliation, though they had so lately forsaken him, promising spiritual peace and every blessing. Yet, after all, they were greatly alarmed, as if they had seen a spirit.

When we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts; sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble. Those who are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. Many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted, rise from our mistakes concerning Christ. All the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts. Why do thoughts arise that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, unfit us for our duties, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us? He therefore spake with them on their unreasonable unbelief, seeing that every circumstance so well agreed with his former declarations, and should inspire them with joy and confidence. He showed his wounds and allowed them to touch his body, that they might be sure it was risen from the dead. To confirm this still more, Jesus was pleased to eat before them.

Having thus satisfied their minds, he showed how these events agreed with his former discourses, as well as with the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament; opening their understandings as well as explaining the scriptures. He convinced them that nothing had passed but what was foretold by the ancient prophets, and necessary for the honour of

God in the salvation of sinners, both in his death and in his resurrection. And it was now his purpose, as well as agreeable to the tenour of the scriptures, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to sinners of every nation; that all men should be taught the nature and necessity of repentance, in order to the forgiveness of their sins. And that these blessings were to be sought for by faith in the name of Jesus, as the purchase of his atoning sufferings, the fruit of his intercession, and the effect of his grace. Go, preach Christ crucified, be not ashamed of his cross, not ashamed of a suffering Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it behoved him to suffer, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin: nay, it became him to be perfected through sufferings, Heb. 2. 10. That he rose from the dead on the third day, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the scriptures were fulfilled. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer, that he dares face those powerful enemies who had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. Begin at Jerusalem, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may find themselves disappointed. And Christ would give a further example of forgiving enemies. That city might justly have been excepted by name; but so far from that, the first offer of gospel grace is made to Jerusalem, thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace. Though all nations were thus to be called upon, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to be first invited to partake of his spiritual redemption. The apostles, especially, were chosen to be witnesses to the truth of Christ's resurrection, and the doctrine of salvation connected therewith. They were, after his ascension, to wait till he sent the blessing of his Holy Spirit, which the Father had promised to his church by and through him; that by his powerful energy on the minds of the hearers, they might be strengthened for their work and rendered successful therein.

Christ wrought upon their minds in a manner which they themselves were sensible of. Observe, that Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men. He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. Even good men need to have their understandings opened. Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is, by opening the understanding to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed: The Spirit in the word, and the Spirit in the heart, say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn above their bibles, in this world; but they need to be learning out of their bibles. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

When meeting together in the communion of saints, the Saviour will manifest himself to us, he will speak pardon and peace to our souls, assure us of his love, and open our understandings to receive the truths of scripture. Then shall we see with increasing clearness, that the purchase of salvation is completed, and that repentance and remission of sins, by faith in his name, are freely to be preached to all.

44. The Jewish division of the scriptures is as follows. The *law* contained the five books of Moses. The *prophets*, or teachers, contained Joshua, Judges, the books of Samuel and of Kings, as well as the prophetic writings, excepting Daniel. The *psalms*, or holy writings, comprehended the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

§ 156. Ver. 50—53. *Christ's ascension.*

This evangelist omits the solemn meeting between Christ and his disciples in Galilee; and has now nothing more to account for but his ascension into heaven, of which we have a very brief narrative.

He ascended from Bethany, which is near Jerusalem, adjoining the Mount of Olives. There was the garden in which his sufferings began; there he was in his agony. Those that would go to heaven, must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrow, must go by agonies to their joys. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave, because his resurrection could be proved by their seeing him alive afterwards: but they saw him ascend into heaven, because they could not otherwise have a demonstration of his ascension. He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a bless-



ing behind him; he lifted up his hands, as the high-priest did when he blessed the people; see Lev. 9. 22. While he was blessing them, he was parted from them. He began to bless them on earth, but he went to heaven to go on with it. He was carried up into heaven; not by force, but by his own act and deed. As he arose, so he ascended, by his own power.

They worshipped him. Christ expects adoration from those who receive blessings from him. He blessed them; in token of gratitude for which, they worshipped him. This fresh display of Christ's glory drew from them fresh acknowledgments and adorations. They knew that though he was parted from them, yet he could, and did take notice of their adorations of him; the cloud that received him out of their sight, did not put them or their services out of his sight.

They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There they were ordered to continue till the Spirit should be poured out upon them, and thither they went accordingly, though it was into danger. This was a wonderful change, and an effect of the opening their understandings. The glory of Christ is the joy, the exceeding joy of all true believers, even while they are here in this world.

They abounded in acts of devotion, while they were in expectation of the promise of the Father. They were continually in the temple, as their Master when he was at Jerusalem. They joined in the temple songs. While waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. Praising and blessing God are never out of season; and nothing better prepares the mind for receiving the Holy Ghost. Fears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up. Though we expect no miraculous powers to be communicated, we are encouraged to wait and pray for God's more ordinary, but not less valuable influences, through our risen and ascended Advocate.

Believers have in this ascending of Christ unspeakable comfort, through their interest in him. In all his glory he forgets them not. As all the waters of his sufferings did not quench his love, nor did he leave it behind him buried in the grave, so he let it not fall to the earth when he ascended on high, but it ascended with him, and he still retains it in his glory. Our flesh, which he assumed on earth, he took up into heaven, as a token

of indissoluble love between him and those whom he redeemed; it was received there, and he sends down from thence, as the rich token of his love, his Spirit into their hearts; so that these are mutual remembrances. Can he forget his own on earth, having their flesh so closely united to him? He feels what they suffer, Acts 9. 4. And can they forget him whose Spirit dwells in them, and records with life to their hearts the passages of his love, and brings all those things to their remembrance, and so proves indeed the Comforter, by representing unto us that his love is the spring of our comforts? And when we send up our requests we know of a Friend before us there, a most true and faithful Friend, who fails not to speak for us what we say, and much more. This is the ground of a christian's boldness at the throne of grace; yea, therefore is the Father's throne the throne of grace to us, because the throne of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, is beside it. Surely it will not be hard to persuade those who believe these things, and have a portion in them, to set their hearts on them, and for that end to take them off from all other things as unworthy of them: yea, it will be impossible for them to live without the frequent and sweet thoughts of the place where the Lord Jesus is.—(88.)

The Amen that concludes, seems to be added by the church and every believer to the reading of the gospel; signifying an assent to the truths of the gospel, and a hearty concurrence with all the disciples of Christ in praising and blessing God. Amen. Let him be continually praised and blessed. Let us rely on his promises, and plead them. Let us worship his name, rejoice in his glory, and wait for his salvation. Let us continually attend on his ordinances, praise and bless God for his mercies, set our affections on things above, and expect the Redeemer's return to complete our happiness. Amen. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

50. The town of Bethany was nearly two miles from Jerusalem; and we learn from Acts 1. 12, that the place where our Lord ascended was only a sabbath day's journey, or about a mile from the city. The first part of Mount Olivet was called Bethphage, and extended to that distance; and then the tract called Bethany began, and from that spot our Lord ascended. See the plan of the city of Jerusalem.

The tabular harmony at the commencement of the volume, shows that several facts and circumstances are related by St Luke, which are but transiently mentioned by the other evangelists.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

### ST. JOHN.

THE apostle and evangelist, John, was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman of Bethsaida, who appears to have possessed some property, as he owned a vessel, and had hired servants, Mark i. 20, and we have no reason to suppose that John and his brother James were illiterate. Salome, their mother, compare Matt. 27. 56, and Mark 15. 40, 41, attended our Saviour and ministered to his wants. Doubtless, in common with their nation in general, they were acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and expected the Messiah, believing, however, that his kingdom would be a temporal one. From ch. 1. 37—40, it is supposed that the apostle John was a disciple of John the Baptist.

The precise age of John, when called to be an apostle, is not recorded, but he seems to have been the youngest of the twelve. He was especially favoured with our Lord's regard and confidence, so as to be spoken of as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was very sincerely attached to his Master, and though he fled like the other apostles when Christ was betrayed, he recovered his firmness, and was present during the crucifixion. He was present at the appearances of our Lord after his resurrection; and his intercourse with Mary, the mother of Christ, peculiarly qualified him to write an account of his Lord. He exercised his ministry at Jerusalem with much success, as is related in the Acts, and survived the destruction of that city, agreeably to Christ's prediction, ch. 21, 22. Ecclesiastical history relates that after the death of Christ's mother, John went to Asia Minor, where he founded seven churches in as many cities, but resided chiefly at Ephesus. Towards the close of Domitian's reign he was banished to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote his Revelation. On the accession of Nerva he was liberated, and returned to Ephesus, where it is considered he wrote his gospel and epistles, about A. D. 97, and died in the hundredth year of his age, about A. D. 100, in the reign of the emperor Trajan.

No doubt has ever been thrown on the genuineness and authenticity of John's gospel. The details prove that the writer had heard the discourses he relates, and had witnessed the scenes he describes. In addition to the strongest internal testimony, we have the uninterrupted evidence of the ancient fathers. In reference to the period at which it was written, should be noticed the explanations frequently given respecting Jewish names, feasts, and customs, which became more necessary as christianity was more widely diffused among the Gentiles, and after the destruction of Jerusalem. The remarkable prophecy concerning the destruction of that city, it will be observed, is omitted by John, as no object could be attained by his repeating it. His narrative is remarkably clear and simple, and the language more fluent than that of the other evangelists, which may have arisen from John's better acquaintance with the Greek language by his long residence at Ephesus, though the Hebraisms occurring in this gospel clearly prove that it was written by a Jew. And if the language be homely, the treasure itself is heavenly, even the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Bishop *Blomfield* has well stated, that the design of this gospel appears to be "to convey to the christian world just and adequate notions of the real nature, office, and character of that great Teacher, who came to instruct and to redeem mankind. For this purpose, John studiously selected for his narrative, those passages of our Saviour's life which most clearly displayed his Divine power and authority; and those of his discourses, in which he spake most plainly of his own nature, and of the efficacy of his death, as an atonement for the sins of the world. This is very clearly stated, ch. 20. 31. It was not to accumulate as many instances as possible of the miraculous power exerted by Jesus; but only those which most distinctly illustrated his peculiar office and nature: 'These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.' This expression seems to prove, that those persons are wrong, who suppose that St. John wrote his gospel merely to supply the defects and omissions of the other evangelists. The real difference between them is, that they wrote a history of our Saviour's life; but St. John of his person and office."

*Irenaeus* and other ancient writers mention two especial motives why John composed his gospel. 1. To refute the heresies of Cerinthus, and of the Nicolaitans, who attempted to corrupt the christian doctrine; 2. To supply important events in our Saviour's life, which the other evangelists had omitted. *Michaelis* observes, that if Irenaeus had not asserted that the gospel according to John was written against the Gnostics, and especially against Cerinthus, the contents of the gospel itself would lead to that conclusion. The discourses of Christ here recorded, seem to be selected with a different view from that of the first three evangelists, who have given such as are of a moral nature, whereas those given by John are chiefly declaratory, and relate to Christ's divinity, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the supernatural aid to be communicated to the apostles, and other similar subjects. The words "light" and "life," especially, have reference to the false philosophy of those heretics, who perverted these terms. It is unnecessary here to enter into particulars respecting the tenets of the Gnostics and other heresies, which at one time prevailed to a great extent, but are refuted by the statements of this gospel.

By omitting, or only cursorily mentioning, the events particularly recorded by the other evangelists, John tacitly gives testimony that their narratives are true, and leaves room for the doctrinal statements already mentioned, and for particulars omitted in the other gospels, many of which are exceedingly important. These omissions also confirm the unanimous statement of the fathers, that the other gospels were written previously to this. Nor though its contents are especially of a doctrinal nature, are they unimportant in other respects. *Campbell* observes, "Here we have

also the true sources of christian consolation under persecution, and the strongest motives to faith, patience, constancy, and mutual love, in every situation wherein Providence may place us."

Scott remarks, that as John wrote after the other evangelists, so he evidently intended to lead his readers forward in the knowledge of the great mystery of godliness, and into an experience of its sanctifying effects upon the heart of every true believer.

Thus this gospel has much less of narrative, and is more largely occupied with the doctrines and discourses of the Lord Jesus. The topics also of the discourses possess a marked character, indicating that they have been selected with an especial view to the presenting of what, during his earthly ministry, Jesus had taught concerning his own person, and the spiritual and never-dying blessings which he confers upon those who believe on his name.—(33. 70. 77.)

## CHAPTER I.

### § 2. Ver. 1-5. *The Divinity of Christ.*

The other evangelists leave us to collect the Godhead of Christ from his miracles and doctrine, and the various statements of his glory and perfections recorded by them, but John begins his gospel with an express statement of this fundamental truth. The title of "The Word" is peculiar to this evangelist, at least with few exceptions; and is nearly equivalent to "Wisdom" as used by Solomon. The evangelist declares that in the beginning was the Word. Nothing that man can know could be before this; time began when the creation was called into existence by the Word himself. The Jews were constantly taught in their synagogues that the Word of God was the same as God, and that by the Word all things were made, which undoubtedly, as Pearson observes, was the reason St. John delivered so great a mystery so briefly. But they knew not that this Word was made flesh, and that this Word made flesh was Jesus Christ.

The plainest reason why the Son of God is called the Word, seems to be, that as our words are the interpretations of our minds to others, so was the Son of God sent in order to reveal his Father's mind unto the world.—(99.)

What the evangelist saith of Christ is enough to prove beyond contradiction that he is God. He asserts,

1. His existence in the beginning. The Word had being before the world had a beginning. He that was in the beginning, never began, and therefore was ever without beginning of time.

2. His coexistence with the Father. The Word was with God. (1.) A distinct Person or Substance, for he was with God; and yet the same in substance, for he was God, Heb. 1. 3. (2.) There was a glory and happiness which Christ had with God before the world was, ch. 17. 5. (3.) The mystery of man's redemption by

this Word incarnate, was hid in God before all worlds, Eph. 3. 9. He that undertook to bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3. 18, was himself from eternity with God; so that man's reconciliation to God was concerted between the Father and Son from eternity.

3. His agency in making the world is here expressly asserted. All things were made by him, not as a subordinate instrument. The contrary is denied. Without him was not any thing made, that was made, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation; help was laid upon One that was mighty indeed, for it was laid upon him that made all things. He is appointed the Author of our bliss, who was the Author of our being.

4. The original of life and light that is in him, v. 4. He has life in himself; not only the true God, but the living God. All living creatures have their life in him; all the life also that is in the creation is derived from him, and supported by him. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things of which fallen man, who lies so much under the power of death and darkness, has need.

5. The manifestation of him to the children of men. If this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little noticed and regarded? To this is answered, v. 5, The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not.

Though men by the fall are become darkness, yet enough to make God known to them, is manifested in them; see Rom. 1. 19, 20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. But the darkness of error and sin overpowered and quite eclipsed this light. In the darkness

of the types and shadows the light shone; but such was the darkness of their understandings, that they could not see it. It was requisite that Christ should come, both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world, and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

Thus we see that to the Person of Christ, as the foundation of all true godliness, "all the prophets and apostles witness." Yea, God himself has testified that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Let us then beware of those who degrade Him whom the Spirit of truth and holiness delights to glorify, and let us never think of him whose name is called the Word of God, as any other than God over all, blessed for evermore; as subsisting before all worlds with God, co-equal with, yet distinct from the eternal Father. Standing on these plain testimonies of scripture, without indulging vain reasonings or requiring curious explanations, let us avoid all who deny or interpret away the Deity of Christ.

Let us then pray without ceasing that our eyes may be opened to behold this Light, that we may walk in it; and thus be made wise unto salvation by faith in Jesus Christ!

3. Whatever may be the source from whence St. John derived the term *Logos*, or Word, all the best informed inquirers are agreed, contrary to the Unitarians, that it designates a real subsisting Being, and not an attribute, as wisdom, or reason. Indeed the personality of the *Logos* is evident from the whole of the passage.—*Bloomfield*. It was no new interpretation to the Jews, that it was the Word of God which was revealed in their scriptures as the Creator of the world. *Allix* has proved, by an astonishing number of references, that the general term applied in the Jewish writings to the wonderful Personage so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament was, the Word of God. The Jewish targums, or paraphrases, in innumerable instances, translate the Hebrew word *Jehovah* by that term. It is also so applied by *Philo*, a learned Jew, a contemporary of our Lord and the apostles.—*Townsend*. See also note to the next section.—The term *Logos* should be left untranslated for the same reason why the name Jesus and Christ are left untranslated. As every appellation of the Saviour is descriptive of some excellence in his person, nature or work, so the epithet is very properly applied to him, who is the fountain of all wisdom, and the grand source of revelation.—*A. Clarke*. He gives a summary of the testimonies from *Philo* concerning the *Logos*.

§ 2. Ver. 6—14. *Christ's Divinity and Humanity.*

The coming of Christ was intended to introduce more general diffusion of Divine light among men; this was introduced by the ministry of John the baptist. He

was a man sent from God, wise, holy, and useful, as a man and a prophet, but the evangelist speaks of him very differently from the Word that was God and made all things. John came to bear witness concerning Jesus. He was sent of God to tell the world that the long looked for Messiah was now come, who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel; and that the dispensation was at hand, which would bring life and immortality to light. Nothing more fully shows the darkness of men's minds, than that when the light was manifested, there needed a witness to call attention to it. John was a shining light, but he was not "the Light," having none for himself but from Christ; nor for others but by reflecting his light. We must take heed of overvaluing ministers, as well as of undervaluing them; they are not our lords, nor have they dominion over our faith, but are ministers by whom we believe, stewards of our Lord's house. We must not give up ourselves by an implicit faith to their direction, for they are not that Light; but we must attend to, and receive their testimony; for they are sent to bear witness of that Light.

Having shown, in the beginning of the chapter, the glories of his Godhead, the evangelist here comes to show the graces of Christ's incarnation, and his favours to man as Mediator.

1. Christ was the true Light; that great light which deserves to be called so. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true Light. By his creating power he lightens every man with the light of reason. By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect lighten every man. Divine revelation is now to be diffused to all people, Matt. 5. 15. By the operation of his Spirit and grace he enlightens all that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him, perish in darkness. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

2. Christ was in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us. The Son of the Highest was here in this lower world; that light in this dark world; that holy thing in this sinful polluted world. He left a world of bliss and glory, and was here in this melancholy miserable world. He undertook to reconcile the world to God, and

therefore was in the world, to satisfy God's justice for the world, and discover God's favour to the world. He was *in* the world, but not *of* it. The greatest honour that ever was put upon this world, which is so mean and inconsiderable a part of the universe, was, that the Son of God was once in the world. And as it should engage our affections to things above, that Christ is there, so it should reconcile us to our present abode in this world, that once Christ was here. What reason Christ had to expect the most affectionate and respectful welcome possible into this world! He came to save a lost world, because it was a world of his own making. Notwithstanding, The world knew him not. His kingdom came not with observation, because it was to be a kingdom of trial and probation. When he comes as a Judge, the world shall know him.

3. He came to his own, to the people of Israel, who were peculiarly his own above all people. The generality rejected him; His own received him not. They had the oracles of God, which told them beforehand when and where to expect him, and of what tribe and family he should arise. He came among them himself with signs and wonders, yet they received him not; did not receive his doctrine, did not welcome him as the Messiah. Many who in profession are Christ's own, yet do not receive him, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to reign over them. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that received him.

Observe the true christian's description; he receives Christ, and believes on his name, the Lord our Righteousness, Jesus a Saviour; the latter explains the former. Also observe, the true christian's dignity and privilege are twofold.

(1.) The privilege of adoption, which takes them into the number of God's children; To them gave he power to become the sons of God, ver. 12. Hitherto, the adoption pertained to the Jews only.

(2.) The privilege of regeneration, ver. 13, Which were born. All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated. This real change evermore attends that relative one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. This new birth is not propagated from our parents. It is not produced by the natural power of

our own will. It is of God. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means, 1 Pet. 1. 23, and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole Author. True believers are born of God, 1 John 3. 9, and 5. 1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the love of God, if we have not something of his likeness, nor claim the privileges of adoption, if we are not under the power of regeneration.

4. The Word was made flesh, ver. 14. This expresses Christ's incarnation more clearly. By his Divine presence he always was in the world, and by his prophets he came to his own. But now that the fulness of time was come, he was sent forth after another manner, God manifested in the flesh. Observe here,

(1.) The human nature of Christ with which he was veiled, and that expressed two ways. He was made flesh, the meanest part of man. Flesh speaks man weak, and Christ was crucified through weakness, 2 Cor. 13. 4. Flesh speaks man mortal and dying, Ps. 78. 39, and Christ was put to death in the flesh, 1 Pet. 3. 18. Nay, flesh speaks man tainted with sin, Gen. 6. 3; and Christ, though he was perfectly holy and sinless, yet appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8. 3, and was made sin for us, 2 Cor. 5. 21. Also he dwelt among us, here in this lower world. The Lord God came and dwelt even among the rebellious, Ps. 68. 18. He dwelt among us. He was in the world, not as a wayfaring man who tarries but for a night, but he dwelt among us. The original words are observable, "He tabernacled among us," he dwelt as in a tabernacle; which intimates, that he dwelt here in very mean circumstances, not as in a palace, but as in a tent; for he had not where to lay his head, and was always upon the remove.

(2.) Observe, the beams of his Divine glory, which darted through this veil of flesh; We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Other men discover their weaknesses to those who are most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those that were most intimate with him, saw most of his glory. We saw it. They were themselves eye-witnesses of those proofs on which they built their testimony that he was the Son of the living God. The word signifies a fixed, abiding sight. This apostle himself

explains it; What we declare unto you of the word of life, is what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have looked upon, 1 John 1. 1. The glory of the Word made flesh, was such a glory as became the only begotten Son of God, and could not be the glory of any other. Although he was in the form of a servant, in respect of outward circumstances, yet, in respect of graces, his form was like the Son of God. His Divine glory appeared in the holiness of his doctrine; in his miracles, which extorted from many this acknowledgment, that he was the Son of God; it appeared in the purity and beneficence of his whole conversation. God's goodness is his glory, and he went about doing good. See the advantage those he dwelt among had. He dwelt among them, full of grace and truth. The incarnate Word was every way qualified for his undertaking as Mediator. He was full of grace, fully acceptable to his Father, therefore qualified to intercede for us; and full of truth, fully apprized of the things he was to reveal, therefore fit to instruct us. He had fulness of knowledge and fulness of compassion. He has fulness of grace and truth for us. He received to give.

He is full of grace and truth, and they that are Christ's receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. There is every grace in them which is in Christ. Grace for grace, that is, grace answerable to grace. There is no grace in Christ, but there is its image in believers to answer it: the image is a true image, and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image which is in the original; there is feature for feature, and member for member.—(21.)

9, 10. The best commentators are agreed that the words which are translated, "that cometh into the world," should be taken as referring to "the Light." He was in the world, refers to the appearance of the Word in a human form, as ver. 14.—*Bloomfield*. "Which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man."—*Schulefeld*.

14. "The Word became flesh." The proper sense of the word "made" is, to be brought into existence, or, into a new state or mode of existence. The appellation "Only Begotten" implies that he is the Object of the highest and unique affections of a peculiar and unparalleled Divine love; the Son of God in a sense absolutely peculiar to himself, supreme in dignity, unique and exclusive in nature. See *J. P. Smith*, who considers this very important passage, v. 1—14, at considerable length. In this note it is impossible to state more than that he observes 1. "The Logos," or Word, cannot be expressed by any abstract term, but must refer to a personal subsistence,

and that it was in use among the Jews to designate the Messiah, especially as a Mediator. 2. "In the beginning," refers to the beginning of all time and nature. 3. "The Word was with God," denotes that the Word existed in the eternal period before all creation, naturally and essentially one Being with the Deity, yet possessing some species of relative distinction. 4. The order of clauses, and the Hebrew manner of concatenating clauses, suggest a connexion with the following clause, thus, "The Word was with God, in such a manner, that, in fact, the Word was God." 5. "All things were made (or produced, or brought into existence) by him," &c. 6. "In him was life." A cause stated adequate to the effect mentioned in the preceding sentence. 7. "And the life was the light of men." The Messiah was predicted by the prophets, and described by himself as the Light. Here, the Author of existence is represented as the Author of all that constitutes the good of existence—the immediate Bestower of all spiritual blessings. 8. The world, in ver. 9, 10, seems to imply the human race, particularly those of mankind opposed to Christ and his gospel. 9. "The Word even became flesh; and full of grace and truth, he made his tabernacle among us; so that we beheld his glory, the glory certainly of the Only-Begotten from the Father." *J. P. S.* sums up his powerful reasoning in explanation and support of the above statements by the following extracts from *Griesbach*; "So numerous and clear are the arguments and the testimonies of scripture, in favour of the true Deity of Christ, that I can hardly imagine how, upon the admission of the Divine authority of scripture, and with a regard to the fair rules of interpretation, the doctrine can be called into doubt by any man. Especially the passage, John 1. 1—3, is so clear, and so superior to all exception, that by no daring efforts, of either commentators or critics, can it ever be overturned, or snatched out of the hands of the defenders of the truth." *Griesbach*, during a long life, probably devoted more labour to the critical study of the New Testament, than any other man, and with greater success.

§ 2. Ver. 15—18. *John the Baptist's testimony to Christ.*

The evangelist here shows how the things he had stated accorded to what John the baptist had testified concerning Jesus. As to the order of time and entrance on his work, he came after John, but in every other way he was preferred before him. Indeed he was before him: that expression clearly shows Jesus had an existence before he appeared on earth as man.

The 16th verse has manifest connexion with ver. 14, where the incarnate Word was said to be full of grace and truth. Now here John makes this the matter, not only of adoration, but of thankfulness. All believers, from the beginning of the world, had received all their wisdom, knowledge, strength, and grace from the fulness of Christ, and all, to the end, must receive from the same fulness. For men have nothing of their own but sin.

weakness, folly, and misery; none ever had, or can have any thing from God, but as it is communicated through the Son, the eternal Word. All fulness dwells in him, from which alone fallen sinners have been, are, and shall be receiving, by faith, all that renders them wise, strong, holy, useful, and happy.

We have received grace for grace. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in this one word, grace; we have received "even grace," so great a gift, so rich, so invaluable: we have received no less than grace; that is a gift to be spoken of with emphasis. The blessing received is grace; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. The manner of its reception is grace for grace.

This speaks, 1. The freeness of this grace. It is grace for grace's sake; not for our sakes, but even so Father, because it seemed good in thy sight. 2. The fulness of this grace. Grace for grace, is abundance of grace, one grace heaped upon another. It is a blessing poured out, plenteous redemption. 3. The serviceableness of this grace. Grace for grace, is grace for the promoting and advancing of grace. The apostles received grace, Röm. 1. 5; Eph. 3. 8, that they might communicate it, 1 Pet. 4. 10. 4. The substitution of new testament grace in the room and stead of old testament grace. There was a grace under the old testament, the gospel was preached then, Gal. 3. 8; but we have gospel grace instead of it, a glory which excelleth, 2 Cor. 3. 10. 5. It speaks the augmentation and continuance of grace. Grace for grace, is one grace, to improve, confirm, and perfect another grace. 6. It speaks the conformity of grace in the saints to the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Grace in us, answering to grace in him, as the impression upon wax answers the seal.

The law was given by Moses, ver. 17, and it was a glorious discovery, both of God's will concerning man, and his good will to man; but the gospel of Christ is a much clearer discovery, both of duty and happiness. In the old testament we often find mercy and truth put together, that is, mercy according to promise; so here, grace and truth denote grace according to promise. Something of grace there was, both in the ordinances instituted for Israel, and the providences concerning Israel; but they were only shadows of good things to come, even of that

grace which is to be brought to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Indeed the law of God is holy, just, and good; it was given for most important purposes, and we should endeavour to make the proper use of it. But we cannot derive from it pardon, righteousness, or strength. It recommends and teaches us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but it cannot supply the place of that. As no mercy comes from God to sinners but through Jesus Christ, no man can come to the Father but by him; no man can know God except as the only begotten and beloved Son reveals him. Ignorance, delusion, and condemnation must be the portion of every man who rejects the Word and Son of God, the substance of all the promises, the life of all doctrines, ordinances, and precepts, the special object of the Father's love admitted to his most secret counsels.—(77.)

17. *Schultens* observes that the Hebrew root from whence the name Jesus is derived, includes the ideas of amplitude, expansion, and space, and is applicable to persons possessing abundance of riches, of power, of knowledge, or of happiness.

18. The Person of the Deity, whose appearances are mentioned under the Old Testament dispensation, was the Word of God, the Son of God, usually veiled in a human form.

§ 18. Ver. 19—28. *John's public testimony concerning Christ.*

The evangelist here relates a more public testimony of John concerning Christ. 1. John disowns himself to be the Christ, who was now expected and waited for. The ministers of Christ must remember that they are not Christ, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. John was merely the voice of a herald to proclaim the Saviour's glory. 2. He disowns himself to be Elias. The Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them. He indeed came in the Spirit and power of Elias, Luke 1. 17, but he was not the person of Elias; he was the Elias God had promised; not the Elias of whom they foolishly dreamed. 3. He disowns himself to be *that* prophet, or *the* prophet. John was not that Prophet which Moses said the Lord would raise up to them of their brethren, like unto him. He was not such a prophet as they expected, who would rescue them from the Romans. He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the

**Messiah.** Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation, not as the old testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work were of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation.

Those sent to examine him, pressed for a positive answer. He gave his answer in the words of scripture. In very humble, modest, self-denying expressions, he applied that scripture to himself, which spake, not his dignity, but his duty and dependence. He gave such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him.

The persons sent, then demanded of John why he baptized his own countrymen, and made disciples, if he were neither the Messiah nor Elias, nor an old prophet risen again. He replied, that he baptized the people with water as a profession of repentance, and as an outward sign of the spiritual blessings to be conferred on them by the Messiah, who had not yet publicly avowed himself, but was in the midst of them, though they knew him not, and was ready to enter on his work, and to whom he was unworthy to render the meanest service.

One would think these chief priests and pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, would have asked who and where this excellent Person was. But they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was wilful; they might have known Christ, and would not. He made this confession in the same place where he was baptizing, that all those who attended his baptism, might be witnesses of it.

21. The expression shows that some particular prophet is denoted. It is usually supposed that Jeremiah was expected by the Jews.

22. The correct reading appears to be, Bethany beyond Jordan, the same name, but not the same place as the village where Lazarus lived. The name signifies a ferry, or place of passage.

§ 18. Ver. 29—36. *Other public testimonies of John concerning Christ.*

The testimony of John concerning Jesus, is supposed to have been given just before Christ returned from his temptation in the wilderness. The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and immediately pointed him out to his hearers as the Lamb of God. The paschal lamb, in the shedding and sprinkling of its blood, the roasting and eating of its flesh, and all

the other circumstances of the ordinance, represented the redemption of man by the death of Christ, and the salvation of sinners by faith in his blood; and the lambs sacrificed every morning and evening, as expiations for the sins of Israel, were evident types of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. They can only refer to Christ slain as a sacrifice to redeem us to God by his blood. John came professedly as a preacher of repentance, yet he tells his followers it was to Christ only, and to his death, that they were to look for the pardon of their sins. It consists with God's glory to pardon all who depend on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Any one may come to the throne of grace for all the blessings of salvation, nor do they want any other plea than that Christ hath died, yea, rather is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

This ground of hope we have—Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. 1. He takes away sin, that which is, above any thing, offensive to the holiness of God, and destructive to the happiness of man. He came to take away the guilt of sin by the merit of his death; and to take away the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace, so that it shall not have dominion. Christ, as the Lamb of God, washes us from our sins in his own blood; that is, he both justifies and sanctifies us: he takes away sin. He is "taking away" the sin of the world, which speaks it not a single but a continued act; it is his constant work and office. 2. He takes away the sin of the world; purchases pardon for all that repent and believe the gospel. The legal sacrifices had reference only to atone for the sins of Israel; but the Lamb of God was offered to be a Propitiation for the sin of the whole world; see 1 John 2. 1, 2. This encourages our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? 3. He does this by taking it upon himself. He is the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world; so the margin reads it. He bore sin *for* us, and so bears it *from* us. God could have taken away sin, by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but here is a way of abolishing sin, yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son sin—a sin-offering for us.

When every expression referring to the death of Christ, evidently indicates the notion of a sacrifice of atonement and



propitiation—when this sacrifice is particularly represented as of the nature of a sin-offering, which was a species of sacrifice prescribed to be offered upon the commission of an offence, after which the offending person was considered as if he had never sinned—it may well appear surprising on what ground any can question that the death of Christ is pronounced in scripture to have been a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of men.—(94. m.)

See Jesus taking away sin, and let that increase our hatred of sin, and our resolutions against it. Let us not hold that fast, which the Lamb of God came to take away. Let it increase our love to Christ, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. 1. 5. Whatever God is pleased to take away from us, if withal he take away our sins, we have reason to be thankful, and have no reason to complain.

This is He, this is the Lamb of God, this person whom I now point at, you see where he stands, this is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man. John calls Christ a man; after me comes a man. As Owen remarks, sometimes the person of Christ being denominated from one nature, the properties and acts of the other are assigned to it.

John refers to what he had said of Jesus before; adding, and I knew him not. As he could not be biassed to speak honourably of him, because he was a stranger to him, so, being such a stranger to him, he was not able to say any thing of him but what he received from above.

Or, although John knew him *personally*, on account of the connexion between the families, he knew him not *officially* as the Messiah, till the promised token was vouchsafed to him; till a voice from heaven proclaimed him the Son of God, and the Spirit, descending like a dove, hovered over him.—(62.)

The great intention of John's ministry and baptism, was to introduce Jesus Christ: that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. The ministry of the word and sacraments is designed for no other end than to lead people to Christ, and to make him more and more manifest. Baptism with water made way for the manifesting of Christ, as it acknowledged our corruption and filthiness, and signified our cleansing by him who is the fountain opened, Zech. 13. 1.

For confirmation of his testimony concerning Christ, John vouches the extraordinary appearance at his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him. Thus the first testimony given to the apostles was by the descent of the Spirit upon them. He was told to expect this, it was an instituted sign by which he might know it for certain. He saw and bare record that he is the Son of God. This is the conclusion of John's testimony, in fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Here is John's testimony to Christ, the next day after, ver. 35, 36. Where observe, 1. He took every opportunity that offered itself, to lead people to Christ. Ministers should not only in public preaching, but in private converse, witness to Christ. He looked stedfastly, and fixed his eyes upon him. Those that would lead others to Christ, must be diligent and frequent in contemplation of him themselves. 2. He repeated the same testimony he had given to Christ the day before. His doctrine was the same in private that it was in public. The doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for taking away the sin of the world, ought especially to be insisted upon by all good ministers: Christ, the Lamb of God, Christ and him crucified. 3. John intended this especially for his two disciples that stood near. He bore witness to Christ in their hearing; that they might leave all to follow him; even that they might leave himself. So far was he from being jealous of Christ's growing interest, that he especially desired to promote it.

29. Gill shows that the epithet, "Lamb of God," given to Christ, must have been understood by the Jews. *Lightfoot* remarks, that John addressed priests and levites who offered the lambs in daily sacrifice. *Townsend* observes, that the salutation of the Baptist seems to mean, that, as far as man was concerned, all the other offices, characters, and attributes of the Holy One of God, are of comparatively inferior moment, unless he be considered as the spotless Lamb that should die for mankind. He adds, "In support of the doctrine of the atonement, there is more authority than for any other revealed in the Jewish or Christian scriptures. It was taught in the beginning of the patriarchal dispensation, in the words of the first promise, and the institution of sacrifices. It was enforced by the uniform testimony of the Jewish church. It is the peculiar foundation, and principal doctrine of the christian church in all ages, which never has deviated from the opinion that the death of Christ on the cross was the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

§ 118. Ver. 37—42. *Andrew and another disciple follow Jesus.*

Andrew and another disciple heard John speak of Christ as the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, and this made them follow him. The strongest and most prevailing argument with an awakened soul to follow Christ, is, that it is he only who takes away sin.

Christ took kind notice of them, ver. 38. He did not stay till they begged to speak with him, but spake first. Whatever communion there is between a soul and Christ, it is he that begins the discourse. He asked, What seek ye? What is your request? Those who instruct people in the affairs of their souls, should encourage such as apply to them. The question Christ put to them, we should all put to ourselves when we begin to follow Christ, What do we design and desire? Those that follow Christ, and yet seek the world or the praise of men, deceive themselves. In following Christ, do we seek the favour of God and eternal life?

In calling him Rabbi, they intimate that their design in coming to him, was to be taught by him. And unless we give up ourselves to be ruled and taught by him, he will not take away our sins. In asking where he dwelt, they intimate desire for further communion with him; they follow to know more of him.

He invites them to come without delay. They asked where he lodged, that they might come at a future season; but Christ invites them immediately to come, and see. Hence learn, that it is wisdom to embrace the present opportunities; Now is the accepted time, 2 Cor. 6. 2. They came, and saw where he dwelt. Gracious souls cheerfully accept Christ's gracious invitations. It is good for us to be where Christ is, wherever it be. As it was but two hours before sunset, they spent the remainder of the day in attending to his instructions.

Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ. He told him whom they had found; We have found the Messias. John had said, He is the Lamb of God, and the Son of God, which Andrew compares with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and concludes that he is the Messiah promised to the fathers: it is now that the fulness of time is come. He persuaded him to come to Christ; this was an instance of true love to his brother. We ought, with particular concern and appli-

cation, to labour for the spiritual welfare of those related to us. It was an effect of his day's conversation with Christ. The best evidence of our profiting by means of grace, is the piety and usefulness of our conversation afterward.

It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ; and if so, it was a proof of Christ's omniscience, that, without inquiry, he could tell his name. The name which Christ gave him speaks his fidelity to Christ. Thou shalt be called Cephas, that is, a stone, which is, by interpretation Peter. Peter's natural temper was hardy and resolute; thus Christ called him Cephas, a stone. Those who come to Christ, must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and steadfast; and it is by his grace that they are so.

40. The disciple not named is generally supposed to have been the evangelist himself.

42. These apostles appear at this time to have been led to recognise Jesus as the Messiah: but they did not become his disciples till some time afterwards, when he called them to be his followers, as narrated by the other evangelists.

§ 18. Ver. 43—51. *Philip and Nathanael called.*

When our Lord purposed to go into Galilee, to enter on his public ministry, he found Philip, and called him to stated attendance on him. See the nature of true christianity, it is following Christ; devoting ourselves to his converse and conduct, attending his motions, and treading in his steps. See the efficacy of the grace of Christ making the call of his word prevail. We are told that Philip was of Bethsaida, and Andrew and Peter were so too, ver. 44. Bethsaida signifies the house of nets, because inhabited mostly by fishermen; thence Christ chose disciples, who were to be furnished with extraordinary gifts, therefore needed not the ordinary advantages of learning.

Nathanael was invited to Christ by Philip, and much is said concerning him. In what passed between Philip and Nathanael, a mixture of pious zeal, with weakness, appears; such as is usually found in beginners, who are yet but asking the way to Zion. Observe what joy Philip felt, and what advantage it was to him, that he was well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament.

Observe the objection Nathanael made against this. Though a Galilean, he had so bad an opinion of Nazareth, that he could not think it likely so great a blessing, or even any good thing could come

out of Nazareth. All who desire to profit by the word of God, must beware of prejudices against places or denominations of men. They should examine for themselves; then, perhaps, they will find good where they expected none. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth, it was owing to his ignorance of Divine grace. It was Philip's wisdom and zeal, that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could; Come and see. Let us not stand raising difficulties to ourselves; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. It is folly to spend time in doubtful disputation, which might be better spent in piety and devotion. Come, and see. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, 1. That many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived. 2. The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion, is to make trial of it.

Our Lord Jesus bore very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity; Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. He is a genuine son of Israel, a servant and worshipper of Jehovah, an honest, upright person, a man of faith and prayer, a real Israelite, not one in name and outward form only. In him was no guile. His profession was not hypocritical. He was not insincere, nor a dissembler, nor dishonest. In short, he was a sound character, a really upright, godly man. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are indeed. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves; we know not what is in a man's heart by looking in his face, but all things are open before Christ, Heb. 4. 12, 13. Doth Christ know us? Let us covet to know him.

This decided attestation of Jesus greatly surprised Nathanael, and with a consistent frankness he inquired how he knew him. To this Jesus replied that he had witnessed what passed when Nathanael was under the fig-tree, before Philip called him. Probably Nathanael was then engaged in fervent prayer, perhaps seeking direction concerning the Hope and Consolation of Israel, where no human eye observed him. This declaration showed him that our Lord knew the secrets of his heart, so that his prejudices

vanished at once, and in astonishment he confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, and King of Israel. His confession is made in form of an adoration, directed to our Lord Jesus himself, which is a proper way of confessing our faith. 1. He confesses Christ's prophetic office, calling him Rabbi, a title the Jews commonly gave to their teachers. 2. He confesses his Divine nature and mission; though he had but a human form and aspect, yet, having Divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, from thence he concludes him to be the Son of God. 3. He confesses, Thou art that King of Israel for whom we have been long waiting. Our Lord then assured him that, as he had believed by this single discovery of his glory, he should be favoured with the sight of greater things, for hereafter, or, henceforth, he would see the angels ministering to him as their glorious Lord in human nature. Through Christ we commune with, and benefit by the holy angels; and things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled and gathered together. Christ is to us as Jacob's ladder, Gen. 28. 12, by whom angels continually ascend and descend, for the good of the saints. It may also be explained figuratively to signify the whole course of Christ's miracles, and perhaps there may also be reference to his future appearance, with all his holy angels, to raise the dead and to judge the world.

Let us seek and pray to be Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, truly christians, approved of Christ himself. Infirmities are found in all, but hypocrisy belongs not to a believer's character. He feels as well as confesses himself to be a poor sinner, who has no hope of deliverance but through the mercy of God in Christ; and while he seeks free salvation, he desires and earnestly endeavours to lead a godly life. He who seeth in secret approves this, hears the supplications which it dictates, and will show that he graciously accepts such petitions. Thus the believer obtains the witness in himself, that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel; and will learn to love his appearing in glory, when he will render to every man according to his works.

46. Nathanael is supposed to be the same as Bartholomew. *Lightfoot* cites passages from Jewish writers, showing that conversation, meditation, and prayer often were carried on under fig-trees.

51. "Hereafter," properly "henceforth;" the words are so translated elsewhere.—*Scholefield.*

## CHAPTER II.

§ 19. Ver. 1—11. *The miracle at Cana.*

On the third day after our Lord's return into Galilee, a marriage was solemnized at a small town called Cana. Mary seems to have been present as one related to the family, and Jesus was invited to the marriage feast with the few disciples he had then called. He accepted the invitation, to honour God's institution, and to teach us to be respectful to our relations, and on good terms with them. Christ was to come in a way different from that of John Baptist.

There was a marriage, and Jesus was called. It is very desirable, when there is a marriage, to have Christ's spiritual, gracious presence: to have the marriage owned and blessed by him; the marriage is then honourable indeed. They that would have Christ with them at their marriage, must invite him by prayer, and he will come.

They wanted wine. 1. There was want at a feast; though much was provided, yet all was spent. While in this world we sometimes find ourselves in straits, even when we think ourselves in the fulness of sufficiency. 2. There was want at a marriage feast. They who, being married, are come to care for the things of the world, must expect trouble, and count upon disappointment. The mother of Jesus solicited him to assist in this strait. Most probably she looked for a miracle, for she knew he was now appearing as the great Prophet, like unto Moses, who so often seasonably supplied the wants of Israel. We ought to be concerned for the wants of our friends, and not seek our own things only. In our own and our friends' straits, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to Christ by prayer. In our addresses to Christ, we must not prescribe to him, but humbly spread our case before him, and then refer ourselves to him to do as he pleases.

Christ's reply evidently was a discouragement to her interposing on such occasions, although there was no disrespect in the words or phrase he used. It was a customary mode of address, and he made use of the same appellation, when speaking to her with affection from the cross. It was an instruction to his relations, that

they must never expect him to have any regard to his kindred according to the flesh, in his working of miracles. And it is a standing testimony against the idolatry of after-ages, in giving undue honours to his mother, not only depending upon her merit and intercession, but beseeching her to "command her Son" to do them good! The Son of God is appointed our Advocate with the Father; but the mother of our Lord was never designed to be our advocate with the Son.

"Mine hour is not yet come." For every thing Christ did, and what was done to him, he had his hour, the fixed time and the fittest time, which was punctually observed. Mine hour for working this miracle is not yet come. His mother moved him to help them when the wine began to fail, so it may be read, ver. 3; but his hour was not yet come till it was quite spent, and there was a total want; not only to prevent any suspicion of mixing some wine with the water, but to teach us that man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for the help and relief of his people. His hour is come when we are reduced to the utmost strait, and know not what to do. Delays of mercy are not to be reckoned denials of prayer.

She kept her hope of Christ's compliance, that he would yet grant her desire. This teaches us to wrestle with God by faith and fervency in prayer, even when he seems in his providence to walk contrary to us. We must, against hope, believe in hope, Rom. 4. 18. She directed the servants punctually to observe his orders; Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Those that expect Christ's favours, must observe his orders with implicit obedience. The way of duty is the way to mercy; Christ's methods must not be objected against.

Christ at length miraculously supplied them. The miracle was turning water into wine; the substance of water acquiring a new form, and having all the appearance and qualities of wine. Extracting the blood of the grape every year from the moisture of the earth, is no less a work of power, though, being according to the common course of nature, it is not such a work of wonder as this. The beginning of Moses' miracles was turning water into blood, Exod. 4. 9; 7. 20; the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which may remind us of the difference between the law

of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The curse of the law turns water into blood, common comforts into bitterness and terror; the blessing of the gospel turns water into wine. Christ hereby showed that he improves creature comforts to all true believers, and makes them comforts indeed.

The circumstances removed all suspicion of cheat or collusion. The water-pots were for their legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions; some enjoined by the law of God, and many more by the tradition of the elders. The Jews ate not, except they wash often, Mark 7. 3. The quantity the pots contained is uncertain, but very considerable. Christ gives like himself; gives abundantly, according to his riches in glory. The miracle was wrought suddenly, and in such a manner as greatly magnified it. As soon as they had filled the water-pots, he said, Draw out now, and it was done. He did not question whether the thing were done as he willed it or not; but as he knew what he would do, so he knew what he could do. Christ's works are all for use. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace?—it is to profit withal; therefore, draw out now.

When the governor or ruler of the feast had found this fresh supply so excellent, he expressed his surprise to the bridegroom that he should act so differently from others, who kept inferior wine till the last. The original word, rendered "well drunk," here implies only taking a moderate quantity sufficient to rejoice the spirits, but consistent with temperance. The observation also refers only to what usually takes place at feasts, and not expressly to that occasion, when we may be sure all was conducted with propriety.

The wine, thus miraculously provided for them, was excellent, which was acknowledged by the governor of the feast; 1. It was certain that this was wine. The governor knew that when he drank it, though he knew not whence it was. No room is left for suspicion. 2. It was the best wine. Christ's works commend themselves even to those who know not their Author. The products of miracles were always the best in their kind.

Christ, in providing thus plentifully for the guests, though he hereby allows a right use of wine, does not invalidate his own caution in the least, which is, that our hearts be not at any time, no not

at a marriage feast, overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, Luke 21. 34. Some also probably was left to confirm the truth of the miracle to the faith of others, and to recompense the entertainment he had received.

Two considerations, drawn from this history, may fortify us against temptations to intemperance. 1. That our meat and drink are the gifts of God's bounty to us, and we owe our liberty to use them, and our comfort in the use of them, to the mediation of Christ; it is therefore ungrateful and impious to abuse them. 2. That wherever we are Christ has his eye upon us; we should eat our bread before God; Exod. 18. 12. Though we need not scruple to feast with our friends on proper occasions, yet every social interview should be so conducted that we might invite the Redeemer to join with us, if he were now on earth; and all levity, luxury, and excess must be offensive to him.

In the conclusion of this history we are told, 1. That this was the beginning of miracles which Jesus did. He could have wrought miracles when he disputed with the doctors, but his hour was not come. He had power, but there was a time of the hiding of his power. 2. That herein he manifested his glory; hereby he proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the Only-Begotten of the Father. This expression is never used concerning any miracles of the prophets and apostles, nor could it properly be so used. They were only instruments, the power being of God, and for the display of the glory which belonged to him alone; but Jesus wrought by his own power, and displayed his own glory. 3. That his disciples believed on him. Those whom he had called; who had seen no miracle, and yet followed him, now saw this, and had their faith strengthened by it. Even the faith that is true, at first is but weak; but the manifestation of the glory of Christ is the great confirmation of the faith of Christians.

6. Dr. E. Clark, in 1801, saw many large stone water-pots among the ruins of Cana; and in 1819, Rae Wilson saw several females in that neighbourhood carrying water-pots of the sort here described.

On the circumstances attending this miracle we may observe, that the festivities at an eastern marriage last several days. The resort appears to have been greater than the provision of wine was calculated for. The words of our Lord to his mother do not imply strong reprehension. The term "woman," was the form of address to

females of all ranks, even to those of the highest; (Xenophon represents Cyrus as using it to the queen of Armenia;) but probably something of a rebuke was intended for interference in desiring a miracle, a matter to which her parental authority did not extend. The hour or time intended seems to have been when the wine was quite gone. The word "metretes," translated firkin, was a measure from 7½ to 9 gallons, the largeness of the quantity placed the miracle beyond dispute; many guests might still assemble, and the remainder would be acceptable to the bridegroom. Or, as *A. Clarke* conjectures, the water was changed into wine as it was drawn out, but not otherwise. The architrachinus, or governor of the feast, was a person appointed to superintend the preparation and conducting of the feast. He did not make one of the guests, but moved from place to place to see that all were attended to, and to give the requisite orders. His observation refers to what was usual, not what then occurred. *Theophylact* observes that our Lord directed the wine to be tasted by him whose office requiring him to observe the strictest sobriety, could not have had his taste vitiated by excess. The parties in this marriage probably were relatives to Mary; and our Lord, by this first miracle in the presence of his family, offered confirmation to their faith before he entered on his public work.

§ 20. Ver. 12—22. *Christ casts the buyers and sellers out of the temple.*

Capernaum was a large and populous city, about a day's journey from Cana; it is called Christ's own city, Matt. 9. 1, because what little rest he had, was there. His continuance there was at this time not many days, because the passover was at hand, and he must attend it.

Christ, being made under the law, observed the passover at Jerusalem: see Exod. 23. 17. Thus he taught us by his example strict observance of Divine institutions, and diligent attendance on religious assemblies.

The first public work in which we find Christ engaged, was driving from the temple the mercenary traders whom the covetous priests and rulers encouraged to make a market-place of its courts. Considering the number of sacrifices used at the feast of the passover, many people must have been assembled; yet Jesus, appearing as a poor man, little known, without human authority, attendants, or arms, except a scourge made of cords, probably those used in confining the cattle, drove them away, and overturned the tables of the money-changers.

Sinners prepare the scourges with which they themselves will be driven out from the temple of the Lord. He did not make a scourge to chastise the offenders, his punishments are of another nature, but only to drive out them and their cattle; he aimed no further than at reformation: see

Rom. 13. 3, 4; 2 Cor. 10. 8. In pouring out the money he showed his contempt of it. In overthrowing the tables, he showed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain.

He gave them a good reason why they should not profane the temple; because it was the house of God, and not to be made a house of merchandise. It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest; for the holiness of the place promoted the sale of their commodities. Those make God's house a house of merchandise, whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business when attending religious exercises, as those, Amos 8. 5; Ezek. 33. 31; or, who perform Divine offices for filthy lucre, Acts 8. 18.

In ordering the sellers of doves to remove them, Jesus expressly called God "his Father," in a manner which implied he was the promised Messiah. When the disciples witnessed his courage and holy indignation, so different from the usual gentleness of his character, they recollected a passage in which David, speaking as a type of the Messiah, had spoken of his earnest desire to purify the Divine ordinances, and that he could have no ease till this was done, and they at once perceived how applicable it was to this conduct of Jesus.

Christ, having thus purged the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. The sign he gives is, his own death and resurrection, which he foretells in figurative expressions. This was produced against him at his trial to prove him a blasphemer, Matt. 26. 60, 61, and by misquoting the words, they bare false witness against him.

He foretells his death by the Jews' malice, in these words, Destroy ye this temple; I will permit you to destroy it. He foretells his resurrection by his own power; In three days I will raise it up. Christ raised himself, resumed his own life. They could tell how long the temple was in building, but they show ignorance, 1. Of the meaning of Christ's words. Men often run into gross mistakes by understanding that literally which the scripture speaks figuratively. 2. Of the almighty power of Christ, as if he could do no more than a mere man. The difficulty is soon solved by the explanation; He spake of the temple of his body. It was, like the temple, the

habitation of God's glory; there the eternal Word dwelt, the true Shechinah. The temple was the place and medium of intercourse between God and Israel; there God revealed himself to them, there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus, by Christ, God speaks to us, and we speak to him. Worshippers looked toward that house. So we must worship God looking unto Christ.

When Jesus was risen from the dead, some years after, his disciples remembered that he had said this. They did not now understand Christ's meaning; but afterwards it became intelligible and useful. It contributes much to the understanding of the Divine word, to observe the fulfilling of the scripture. The event will expound the prophecy. Then they made use of it. The scripture and the word of Christ are here put together; they mutually illustrate and strengthen each other. When the disciples saw both what they read in the Old Testament, and what they had heard from Christ, fulfilled in his death and resurrection, they were the more confirmed in their belief of both.

14. It is generally considered that this clearing the outer court of the temple was at the beginning of Christ's ministry, three years before that recorded by the other evangelists as having been effected in the passion week. The devout Gentiles or proselytes of the gate were numerous, and were not allowed to pass beyond the outer court, where it must have been almost impossible for them to engage in prayer, amidst the interruptions of this traffic, which would be very great at the principal festivals.

19. Some suppose our Lord pointed to his own body, while he used the words, This temple. For an account of the temple as it then stood, see the general notes.

20. *Josephus* states that Herod began to rebuild the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, and he reigned eighteen years longer; our Lord was born about a year before the death of that prince, and was now about thirty years of age, which makes out forty-six complete years.

§ 20. Ver. 23—25. *Many believe in Christ.*

Our Lord wrought miracles at Jerusalem during this passover, and many were thus led to believe in Him, and own him as a prophet, or even as the Messiah, but they seem to have had no proper knowledge of the spiritual redemption he came to effect, nor any due sense of their need of his salvation. He did not consort much with them, as if he had confided in their professions; perhaps knowing that they wanted to make him a king, and thereby excite disturbances, for he knew the secret thoughts and dispositions of their hearts. He had no need that others

should testify to him of any man's character or intentions; for by his almighty power he perfectly knew every man's heart, and all its desires and counsels.

He knew all men, their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, so as we do not know any man, scarcely ourselves. He knows his subtle enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters. He knows them that are truly his, knows their integrity, and knows their infirmity too. He knows their frame. He needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, tries the heart. This is the prerogative of the essential, eternal Word, Heb. 4. 12, 13. How fit is Christ to be the Saviour of men, who has such perfect knowledge of the patient's state and case; knows what is in him! How fit also to be the Judge of all! For the judgment of him who knows all men, all in men, must be according to truth.

Beware of a dead faith, or a formal profession; carnal, temporary believers are not to be trusted, and however men impose on others or themselves, they cannot impose on their heart-searching God.

Reader, Christ also knows *thee*: thy cares, fears, perplexities, temptations, afflictions, desires, and hopes, thy helps and hinderances; the progress thou hast made in the Divine life, or thy declension from it. Canst thou say, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, and mourn because I love and serve thee so little—then expect Him to come and take his abode with thee, and thy whole soul shall be full of light!—(11.)

23. From this verse, and chap. 4. 45, and 6. 2. it is clear that Christ worked many more miracles than those recorded by the evangelists.

### CHAPTER III.

§ 21. Ver. 1—8. *Christ's discourse with Nicodemus.*

Nicodemus, a principal man among the Jews, desired to converse with Jesus. He addressed Jesus by the respectful title of Rabbi, and his words show that he expected important and peculiar instruction.

He was afraid, or ashamed to be seen with Christ, and therefore came in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites. But observe, 1. Though he came by night, Christ bid him welcome, and hereby taught his

ministers to encourage good beginnings, though they are weak. 2. Though now he came by night, yet afterward he owned Christ publicly, ch. 7. 50; 19. 39. Grace which is at first but a grain of seed, may grow to be a great tree.

He did not talk with Christ about state affairs, though he was a ruler, but about the concerns of his own soul and its salvation, and went at once to that.

Our Saviour discoursed respecting the necessity and nature of regeneration or the new birth, ver. 3—8. Our Lord at once directed Nicodemus to the source of internal purity. It is plain that he expected the kingdom of the Messiah shortly; and, according to the common notion of the Jews, in external pomp and power: he doubts not but this Jesus who works these miracles, is either the Messiah, or his prophet. But Christ tells him that he can have no benefit by that change of the state, unless there be a change of the spirit, of the principles and dispositions, equal to a new birth.

We may consider this as positively and vehemently asserted by our Lord Jesus: Verily, verily; it may be read, "I the faithful and true Witness say it." Observe,

1. What is required; to be born again; that is, we must live a new life. Birth is the beginning of life; to be born again is to begin anew, as those that have hitherto either lived much amiss, or to little purpose. We must not think to patch up the old building, but begin from the foundation. We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, new aims. We must be born again, and from above. We must be born anew. By our first birth we were corrupt, shapen in sin and iniquity; therefore our souls must be fashioned and enlivened anew.

No stronger expression could have been chosen to signify a great and remarkable change of state and character. We must be entirely different from what we were before, as that which begins to be at any time, is not, and cannot be the same with what formerly existed.—(66.)

We must be born from above. This new birth has its rise *from* heaven, ch. 1. 13, and its tendency *to* heaven: it is to be born to a Divine and heavenly life.

It is a great change made in the heart of a sinner, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It means that something is done in us, and for us, which we cannot do for ourselves. Something is wrought whereby

such a life begins as shall last for ever; for as by our first birth we are born to die, so by our second birth we are born to live for ever.—(7.)

When the grace of God changes the sinner's heart, the person indeed is the same, but he becomes a new man, possessed of new faculties, affections, and dispositions, and makes new use of all his senses and powers. He enters as a new creature into the spiritual world, and becomes capable of employments and satisfactions to which he was a stranger.

2. The indispensable necessity of this. Except we are born from above, we cannot see the kingdom of God. We cannot understand the nature of it. Such is the nature of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, in which Nicodemus desired to be instructed, that the soul must be new-modelled and moulded; the natural man must become a spiritual man, before he is capable of receiving and understanding them, 1 Cor. 2. 14. We cannot otherwise receive the comfort of it; cannot expect any benefit by Christ and his gospel, absolutely necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. Considering what we are by nature, how corrupt and sinful, what God is, and what heaven is, it will appear that we must be born again; because it is impossible that we should be happy, if we are not holy: see 1 Cor. 6. 9—12. Every revelation of God requires the deepest humiliation in sinful man, but man is a self-justifying, self-sufficient creature, he must therefore be effectually changed before he can understand the nature and glory of the gospel.

This great truth of the necessity of regeneration being thus solemnly laid down, it is objected against by Nicodemus, ver. 4. Herein appears, 1. His weakness in knowledge. What Christ spake spiritually, he understood as if there were no other way of regenerating and new-moulding an immortal soul, than by new-framing the body. 2. His willingness to be taught. He acknowledged his ignorance, which implies a desire to be better informed. When we meet with that in the things of God, which is dark, and hard to be understood, we must with humility and industry continue our attendance upon the means of knowledge, till God shall reveal it unto us.

It is then opened and further explained by our Lord Jesus, ver. 5—8. Though Nicodemus understood not the mystery



of regeneration, yet Christ asserts the necessity of it as positively as before.

To clear what he had said, he shows,

1. The Author of this blessed change. To be born again is to be born of the Spirit, ver. 5—8. It is not wrought by any wisdom or power of our own, but by the power and influence of the blessed Spirit of grace. It is the sanctification of the Spirit, 1 Pet. 1. 2, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. 3. 5.

2. The nature of this change; and what that is which is wrought; it is spirit, ver. 6. Those that are regenerated are made spiritual, and refined from the dross and dregs of sensuality. It is a mighty change indeed, no less than a new birth, to become spiritual.

3. The necessity of this change. Christ here shows that we are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God till we are born again, ver. 6. Here is our malady, and the causes of it, which are such as speak plainly that there is no remedy but being born again. We are here told what we are by nature; we are flesh, not only corporeal, but corrupt, Gen. 6. 3. The soul is so captivated by the will of the flesh, that it is justly called flesh; it is carnal. And what communion can there be between God, who is a Spirit, and a soul in this condition?

It is a corruption that is bred with us, and therefore we cannot have a new nature, unless we are born again. By indulging the appetite of the flesh, in eating forbidden fruit, man submitted to the just dominion of the soul to the tyranny of sensual lust, and became no longer a living soul as created, but flesh; Dust thou art. The living soul became dead and inactive; thus in the day he sinned, he surely died, and so he became earthly. In this degenerate state, he transmitted the human nature, thus corrupted and depraved; and in the same plight it is still propagated. Corruption and sin are woven into our nature; we are shapen in iniquity, which makes it necessary that the nature be changed.

He, whose will is a law; he, who is the great Mediator of the new covenant; he, who is the great Physician of souls, knows their case, and what is necessary to their cure; he hath said, Ye must be born again, ver. 7. All are concerned, ye must all be born again: not only the common people, but the rulers, the masters in Israel. We are not to marvel at it; for,

when we consider the holiness of God, the depravity of our nature, and the happiness set before us, we shall not think it strange that so much stress is laid upon this as the one thing needful.

4. This change is here illustrated by two comparisons.

(1.) The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is compared to water, in verse 5. To be born again, is to be born of water and of the Spirit, that is, of the Spirit working like water, as Matt. 3. 11; with the Holy Ghost and with fire, means, with the Holy Ghost as with fire. What is primarily intended here, is, to show that the Spirit, in sanctifying a soul, cleanses and purifies it as water; takes away its filth, by which it was unfit for the kingdom of God. It is the washing of regeneration, Tit. 3. 5. Cooling and refreshing as water to the hunted hart and the weary traveller. The Spirit is compared to water, ch. 7. 38, 39; Isa. 44. 3.

It is also probable that Christ had reference to the ordinance of baptism, which John had used and he himself had begun to use. You must be born again of the Spirit; which regeneration by the Spirit, should be signified by washing with water, as the visible sign of that spiritual grace. Not that all they, and they only, that are baptized, are saved; but without that new birth which is wrought by the Spirit, and signified by baptism, none shall be looked upon as the protected, privileged subjects of the kingdom of heaven. The Jews cannot partake of the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom they had so long looked for, unless they quit all expectations of being justified by the works of the law, and submit to the baptism of repentance, the great gospel duty; for the remission of sins, the great gospel privilege.

(2.) It is compared to wind, verse 8; The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. The same word signifies both the wind and the Spirit. The Spirit came upon the apostles in a rushing mighty wind, Acts 2. 2. His strong influences on the hearts of sinners are compared to the breathing of the wind, Ezek. 37. 9, and his sweet influences on the souls of saints, to the north and south wind, Cant. 4. 16. This comparison is here used to show that the Spirit, in regeneration, works as a free agent. The wind bloweth where it listeth for us; God directs it, it fulfils his word,

Ps. 148, 8. The Spirit dispenses his influences where, and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree he pleases, 1 Cor. 12, 11. Also to show He works powerfully, and with evident effects; Thou hearest the sound thereof: though its causes are hidden, its effects are manifest. When the soul is brought to mourn for sin, to groan under the burden of corruption, to breathe after Christ, to cry Abba, Father, then we hear the sound of the Spirit. And he works mysteriously, and in secret hidden ways; Thou canst not tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. The manner and methods of the Spirit's working are a mystery: see Eccl. 11, 5, and compare it with Ps. 139, 14.

3. The word "Verily" implies a strong assertion; and coming from Christ we are sure that something of peculiar importance is intended. If it be allowed that the expression, "Born again," is figurative, it should be regarded as peculiarly appropriate. To argue, that to be born again, means only to be baptized, would be to say that no one can see or enter into the kingdom of God, that no one can understand the nature of true religion, become Christ's true disciple, or inherit the happiness of heaven—without the baptism of water. Nor can it be understood of reformation; for outward reformation may be hypocrisy, or the result of worldly and selfish motives. A man may change one sin for another, or one sect for another, and yet remain very far from the kingdom of God. As *Queen* observes, "If regeneration here means only reformation of life, our Lord, instead of making any new discovery, has thrown obscurity on what was before plain and obvious, and known, not only to the Jews, but to the wiser heathens." Every one may see that this is applicable to all explanations of the new birth which make this most energetic expression to signify things which are of an inferior nature in religion.  
—From *Scott*.

*D. Wilson* says, "The great moral change of which our Lord chiefly speaks in this conversation, and which is repeatedly inculcated through the scriptures, is the commencement of sanctification, the incipient principle of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. It is a spiritual frame or temper in the mind of fallen man, imparted by the Holy Spirit, the infusion of a new life into the heart, before dead in trespasses and sins. It is not a change of the essence of the soul, or the conferring of any new faculties, but a change in the direction and use of those faculties which sin had corrupted; the reimpresing on man that holy image of God, which he lost by the original transgression. When, therefore, the graces and duties which are the inseparable effects of this change begin to appear, even in the smallest measure, we hope the transformation under review is commenced; when they attain some consistency, we say, in the judgment of charity, that it has actually taken place; and as it shows itself in growing sanctification, we hesitate not on the question of the real operation of the Holy Spirit in the change of heart, but transfer our solicitude to the permanency and abundant fruits of the blessing."

It is well also to observe that christian baptism,

strictly speaking, was not as yet instituted. The only baptism yet practised was that of John, or perhaps one similar, the baptism of proselytes.

6. Our Lord here opposes simply the spirit to the flesh, as the original principles, if the expression may be used, of those different sorts of birth. Again, ver. 8, in what he says of the manner wherein the change is effected, the regenerate are distinguished solely by the words born of the Spirit.—*Campbell*.

§ 21. Ver. 9—13. *Christ with Nicodemus.*

Here is a discourse concerning the certainty and sublimity of gospel truths, to which Nicodemus still made the objection, ver. 9, How can these things be? Christ's explication of the doctrine and the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it not clearer to him. The corruption of nature which makes it necessary, and the way of the Spirit, which makes it practicable, are as much mysteries to him as the thing itself.

Thus the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. He is not only estranged from them, and therefore they are dark to him; but prejudiced against them, therefore they are foolishness to him. Because this doctrine was unintelligible to him, he questions the truth of it. Many think that cannot be proved, which they cannot believe.

Art thou a master in Israel?—a teacher, yet not only unacquainted with the doctrine of regeneration, but incapable of understanding it? This word is a reproof to those that undertake to teach others, and yet are ignorant and unskilful in the word of righteousness themselves; also to those that spend their time in learning and teaching notions, and ceremonies in religion, niceties and criticisms in scripture, and neglect that which is practical, and tends to reform the heart and life.

Christ's discourse, hereupon, of the certainty and sublimity of gospel truths, ver. 11—13, shows the folly of those who make strange of these things; and recommends them to our search. Observe here,

1. That the truths Christ taught, were very certain, and what we may venture upon. Whatever Christ spake, he spake of his own knowledge. The unbelief of sinners is greatly aggravated by the infallible certainty of the truths of Christ. Multitudes are unbelievers as to that which yet they cannot disbelieve!

2. The truths Christ taught, though communicated in language borrowed from earthly things, yet in their own nature were heavenly, ver. 12. Learn hence, the

things of the gospel are heavenly; out of the road of inquiries of human reason, and much more out of the reach of its discoveries. He makes things sensible the vehicle of things spiritual, to make them the more easy and familiar to us. This he has done both in parables and in sacraments. But we have to lament the corruption of our nature, and our great unaptness to receive and entertain the truths of Christ. Earthly things are despised because they are common, and heavenly things because they are abstruse; but wisdom is, and will be justified of her children. Again, holiness and spirituality are not the sinner's delight. And as God is perfectly holy, as happiness consists in his favour, a man by nature has no relish for this kind of happiness; it is plain that unless a man is changed, "except he be born again," he could not enjoy happiness, were he admitted to heaven; therefore it is evident he never can enter.

3. Our Lord Jesus, and he alone, was fit to reveal to us a doctrine thus certain, thus sublime, ver. 13; No man besides hath ascended up into heaven. None but Jesus Christ was able to reveal to us the will of God for our salvation. But how can men believe that this glorious Person, the creator of all worlds, atoned for the sins of his enemies by his ignominious death upon the cross, if they are not sensible that their carnal hearts must be changed by new creating grace, before they can delight in the holy joys of heaven!

Jesus Christ is able, and fit, and every way qualified, to reveal the will of God to us; for it is he that came down from heaven, and is in heaven. He gave Nicodemus an instance of heavenly things, when he told him of One that came down from heaven, and yet is the Son of man. If the regeneration of the soul of man was such a mystery, what then is the incarnation of the Son of God! We have here an intimation of Christ's two distinct natures in one person; his Divine nature, in that he came down from heaven; his human nature, he is the Son of man; and the union of those two, that while he is the Son of man, yet he is in heaven.

He gives proof of his ability to speak of heavenly things, by telling Nicodemus,

1. That he came down from heaven. The intercourse settled between God and man, began above; the first motion towards it did not arise from this earth, but came down from heaven. We love him,

and send to him, because he first loved us, and sent to us. Now this speaks Christ's Divine nature; he is the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15. 47. His intimate acquaintance with the Divine councils, speaks God manifest in the flesh.

2. That he is the Son of man spoken of by Daniel, 7. 13, by whom the Jews always understand the Messiah. And of all the old testament titles of the Messiah, he chose to use this, because most expressive of his humility, and most agreeable to his present state of humiliation.

3. That he is in heaven; the Son of man, as such, was not in heaven till his ascension; but he that was the Son of man, by his Divine nature was then every where present, and particularly in heaven. Thus the Lord of glory, as such, could not be crucified, nor could God, as such, shed his blood; yet that Person who was the Lord of glory, was crucified, 1 Cor. 2. 8, and God purchased the church with his own blood, Acts 20. 28. So close is the union of the two natures in one person, that there is a communication of properties. God is the "He that is," and heaven is the habitation of his holiness. The knowledge of this must be wholly from above, and can be received by faith alone.

10. "The master."—*Middleton*.

13. The sense is, "And no one has ever ascended to heaven, to bring down this information, nor can any one, except the Son of man, (the Messiah,) reveal the counsels of God for the salvation of man;" that is, No one knoweth the counsels of God, but I who came down from Him.—*Bloomfield*. "Which is in heaven" points at the communion of nature, and the Divine majesty which Christ had with the Father, before he came to the earth.

A careful examination of the scriptural use of the expressions "from heaven," and "being, coming, or descending from heaven," shows the idea intended is a *Divine origin* of course applied variously according to the nature of the subject. If we compare the passages in which such language is employed in reference to Christ, with those which are acknowledged to refer simply to the peculiar manifestation or energy of God, we shall find that the former are fully as express and definite as the latter, for denoting an *actual and personal presence*, in distinction from any merely figurative idea. Of the latter we have such passages as Gen. 46. 4; Ex. 3. 7, 8; Num. 11. 17; Neh. 9. 13; Ps. 80. 2; Is. 64. 1; Mic. 1. 2, 3. Of the former we have this passage, and similar declarations concerning the Messiah, made by himself, or by his inspired servants.—*J. P. Smith*.

§ 21. Ver. 14—18, (*first clause*.) Christ with Nicodemus.

Christ here discourses of the great design of his own coming into the world,

and the happiness of those that believe in him, ver. 14—18. Here we have the very marrow and quintessence of the whole gospel; the faithful saying, 1 Tim. 1. 15, that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the children of men from death, and recover them to life. Now sinners are dead men; as one mortally wounded, or sick of an incurable disease, is said to be a dead man, for he is dying. As one that is justly condemned to die for an unpardonable crime, is as a dead man.

*Jesus Christ came to save us by healing us*, as the children of Israel that were stung with fiery serpents, were cured and lived, by looking up to the brazen serpent, Numb. 21. 6—9. In this type of Christ we may observe, 1. The deadly and destructive nature of sin. The guilt of sin is like the pain of the biting of a fiery serpent; the power of corruption is like the venom diffused thereby. Ask awakened consciences, ask damned sinners, and they will tell you, that how charming soever the allurements of sin may be, at the last it bites like a serpent, Prov. 23. 31, 32. God's wrath against us for sin is as those fiery serpents which God sent among the people, to punish them for their murmurings. 2. The powerful remedy against this fatal malady. The case of poor sinners is deplorable; but is it desperate? Thanks be to God it is not; there is balm in Gilead. The Son of man is lifted up, as the serpent of brass was by Moses, which cured the stung Israelites. It was made in the shape of a fiery serpent, and yet had no poison, no sting; fitly representing Christ, who was made sin for us, and yet knew no sin; was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and yet not sinful. The serpent was a cursed creature, Christ was made a curse. It was lifted up upon a pole, and so must the Son of man be lifted up. In his crucifixion he was lifted up upon the cross. In his exaltation, he was lifted up to the Father's right hand, to give repentance and remission. He was lifted up to the cross, to be further lifted up to the crown. And continues to be exalted in the publishing and preaching of his everlasting gospel, Rev. 14. 6. The serpent was lifted up, that all the thousands of Israel might see it. Christ in the gospel is exhibited to us, evidently set forth. It was lifted up by Moses. Christ was made under the law of Moses, and Moses testified of him. He that sent the plague provided the remedy; none

could redeem and save us but he whose justice had condemned us. It was God himself who found the ransom, and the efficacy of it depends upon his appointment. The fiery serpents were sent to punish them for their tempting Christ; so the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 10. 9, and yet they were healed by virtue derived from him. He whom we have offended is our peace. 3. The way of applying this remedy is by believing. If any stung Israelite was so little sensible of his pain and peril, or had so little confidence in the word of Moses, as not to look up to the brazen serpent, justly did he die; but every one that looked up to it, did well, Num. 21. 9. If any so far slight either their disease by sin, or the method of cure by Christ, as not to embrace Christ upon his own terms, their blood is upon their own heads. He hath said, Look, and be saved, Isa. 45. 22, look, and live. We must take pleasure in, and give consent to the methods which infinite Wisdom has taken of saving a guilty world, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as the great Sacrifice and Intercessor. 4. The great encouragements given us by faith to look up to him. He was lifted up that his followers might be saved. The offer of salvation made by him, is general, that whosoever believes in him, without exception, might have benefit by him. The salvation offered is complete. They shall not perish, shall not die of their wounds; iniquity shall not be their ruin. But that is not all; they shall have eternal life. They shall not only not die of their wounds in the wilderness, but they shall reach Canaan, they shall enjoy the promised rest.

Not an Israelite died, as Moses declares, who looked at the brazen serpent. Were they ever ashamed that put their trust in Christ? Were they ever disappointed in their expectations that believed in Him for everlasting life? and the weakest faith, if genuine, as the weakest sight, is as saving as the strongest, because its object is the same.—(48.)

Therefore, if we would escape eternal death, we must renounce ourselves, and lift up the eyes of our faith to Christ crucified, and pray for the pardon of our sins, and then shall our hearts and consciences be healed of the wounds of the devil. Until such time as we have grace to do this, we shall not be cured, but still lie wounded with the stings of Satan, and bleeding to death at the heart, even though

we feel no pain or grief. But when Christ was nailed to the cross, all our sins were laid upon him, therefore if thou dost unfeignedly believe, then all thy sins are crucified with him, and the corruption of thy nature languishes and dies as he languished and died upon the cross.—(56.)

*Jesus Christ came to save us by pardoning us*, that we might not die by the sentence of the law, ver. 16, 17. Here is gospel indeed, good news, the best that ever came from heaven to earth. Here is God's love, in giving his Son for the world, ver. 16, where we have the great gospel mystery revealed; God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son. In order to the redemption and salvation of man, it pleased God to give his only-begotten Son. He not only gave him, sent him into the world with full power to negotiate peace between heaven and earth, but he gave him up to suffer and die for us, as the great expiatory sacrifice; to be to us all we need. Herein God has commended his love to the world: God so loved the world; so really, so richly. Behold and wonder, that the great God should love such a worthless world! That the holy God should love such a wicked world with a love of good will, when he could not look upon it with complacency! Though many of the world of mankind perish, yet God's giving his only-begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a general offer of life and salvation made to all. So far God loved the apostate fallen world, that he sent his Son with this proposal, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish.

Here, also, is the great gospel duty, and that is, to believe in Jesus Christ, whom God hath thus given for us, given to us, to accept the gift, and answer the intention of the Giver. We must yield unfeigned assent and consent to the record God hath given in his word concerning his Son. God having given him to us to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. And here is the great gospel benefit, that whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish. They are saved from the miseries of hell, delivered from going down to the pit, they shall not perish. God has taken away their sin, they shall not die. They are entitled to the joys of heaven: they shall have everlasting life. The convicted traitor

is not only pardoned, but treated as one the King of kings delights to honour.

Here is God's design in sending his Son into the world; it was, that the world through him might be saved, ver. 17. Ever since man sinned, he has dreaded the approach and appearance of any special messenger from heaven, as being conscious of guilt, and looking for judgment. If therefore the Son of God himself come, we are concerned to inquire on what errand he comes; as the elders asked Samuel trembling, "Comest thou peaceably?" And this scripture answers—Peaceably.

Christ did not come to condemn the world. That one blood, of which all nations are made, Acts 17. 26, is tainted with hereditary guilt; justly may such a world be condemned. But if the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have sent his Son among us. He came that the world through him might be saved. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, so saving it. It could not be saved but through him; there is no salvation in any other.

This is good news to a convinced conscience, healing to broken bones and bleeding wounds, that Christ, our judge, came not to condemn, but to save.

*From all this is inferred the happiness of true believers*, ver. 18; he that believeth on Christ, is not condemned. Though he has been a sinner, a great sinner, yet, he is not condemned, he is not dealt with according to the desert of his sins. He is accused, and he cannot plead not guilty, but he can plead as blessed Paul does, Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. He is afflicted, chastened of God, persecuted by the world; but not condemned. The cross perhaps lies heavy upon him, but he is saved from the curse: condemned by the world, but not condemned with the world, Rom. 8. 1; 1 Cor. 11. 32.

§21. Ver. 18, (*latter clause*)—21. *Christ with Nicodemus.*

Christ, in the close, discourses concerning the deplorable condition of those who persist in unbelief and wilful ignorance, ver. 18. 21. Read here the doom of those that will not believe in Christ—they are condemned already. Observe, how great is the sin of unbelievers. God sent One to save us, that was dearest to himself: and shall not he be dearest to us? How great the misery of unbelievers is—they are condemned already; which

speaks a *certain* condemnation. They are as sure to be condemned in the judgment of the great day as if they were condemned already. A *present* condemnation. The wrath of God now fastens upon them; their own hearts condemn them. Also a condemnation *grounded on their former guilt*; he is condemned already, he lies open to the law for all his sins; because he is not by faith interested in the gospel pardon; he is condemned already, because he has not believed. Unbelief may truly be called the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the remedy. It is not a mere speculative mistake, but originates from the enmity of the heart of man to God, from love of sin in some form.

Read also the doom of those that would not know Christ, ver. 19. Many had knowledge of Christ and his doctrine and miracles, but they would not believe in him, while the generality were careless and stupid, and would not know him. And this is the condemnation, the sin that ruined them, that light is come into the world, and they loved darkness rather. Here observe, 1. That the gospel is light, and, when the gospel came, light came into the world. Light is self-evidencing, so is the gospel, it proves its own Divine original. It is a light shining in a dark place, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is come into all the world, Col. 1. 6. 2. The Jews loved the dark shadows of their law, and the instructions of their blind guides, rather than the doctrine of Christ. The Gentiles loved their superstitious services of an unknown God, whom they ignorantly worshipped, rather than the reasonable service which the gospel enjoins. Sinners loved the ignorance and mistakes, which supported them in their sins, rather than the truths of Christ, who would have parted them from their sins. Wretched man is in love with his sickness, in love with his slavery, and will not be made free, will not be made whole. 3. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They love darkness, because they think it an excuse for evil deeds, and they hate the light, because it shows them their sinfulness and misery. 4. Wilful ignorance is so far from excusing sin, that it will be found, at the great day, to aggravate the condemnation. This is the condemnation, this

ruins souls, that they shut their eyes against the light, against Christ and his gospel; they set God at defiance, they desire not the knowledge of his ways, Job 21. 14. We must account in the judgment, not only for knowledge we sinned against, but for knowledge we sinned away.

Christ shows, ver. 20, 21, 1. That it is not strange, if those that do evil, and resolve to persist in it, hate the light of Christ's gospel; for it is a common observation, that every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, ver. 20. Evil-doers seek concealment, out of a sense of shame, and fear of punishment. Sinful works are works of darkness. Thus the gospel is a terror to the wicked world; they come not to this light, but keep as far from it as they can, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. The light of the gospel is sent into the world, to reprove the evil deeds of sinners, Eph. 5. 13; to show that to be sin, which was not thought to be so; and to show them the evil of their transgressions, that sin, by the new commandment, might appear exceeding sinful. For this reason evil-doers hate the light of the gospel. He that does evil, and resolves to go on in it, hates the light, cannot bear to be told of his faults. All that opposition which the gospel of Christ has met with in the world, comes from the wicked heart, influenced by the wicked one. Christ is hated because sin is loved. Those who do not come unto the light, thereby evidence secret hatred of the light. If they had not hated saving knowledge, they would not sit down contentedly in condemning ignorance.

2. On the other hand, renewed hearts bid this light welcome, ver. 21; He that doeth truth, cometh to the light. As it convinces and terrifies evil-doers, so it confirms and comforts those that walk in the truth. Observe here,

*First.* The character of a good man. He is one that doeth truth; he acts truly and sincerely in all he does. He is ready to receive and entertain Divine revelation, as far as it appears to him to be so, what uneasiness soever it may create him. A good man is much in trying himself, and desirous that God would try him, Ps. 26. 2. He is solicitous to know what the will of God is, and to do it, though ever so contrary to his own worldly interest.

A change in his whole character and

conduct has necessarily taken place. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, and is the commanding principle of his future actions. So long as he continues under a load of unforgiven guilt, there can be little else than slavish fear of God; but when he hears a gracious promise of pardon, when on examining the evidence his doubts and uncertainty are removed, when he sees the righteous ground whereon this forgiveness is built, he lays hold of it as his own, and is united to God by unfeigned love.—(66.)

*Second.* Here is the character of a good work; it is wrought in God; in union with him by covenanting faith, and in communion with him by devout affections. Our works are good, when the will of God is the rule of them, and the glory of God the end of them; when they are done in his strength, and for his sake; to him, and not to men; and if by the light of the gospel it is manifest to us that our works are thus wrought, then we have rejoicing, Gal. 6. 4; 2 Cor. 1. 12.

Every one is ready to acknowledge that love to man is an important branch of practical religion. But many great pleaders for this duty do not sufficiently attend to its inseparable connexion with the love of God; in particular, with a sense of redeeming love, or the love of God in Christ, yet no such principle of universal love is any where else to be found.—(66.)

Thus far we have Christ's discourse with Nicodemus; it is probable much more passed between them; it had good effects, for we find, ch. 19. 39, that Nicodemus became a faithful disciple of Christ.

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a subject to which the world is very averse; it is, however, a subject of unspeakable moment, or rather, it is the one subject in which all others meet as in a centre—the grand inquiry, in comparison with which every thing else, how excellent soever, is but specious trifling. What does it signify though we have food to eat in plenty, and variety of raiment to put on, if we are not born again? if after a few mornings and evenings spent in unthinking mirth, sensuality, and riot, we die in our sins, and lie down in sorrow? What does it signify though we are well accomplished to act our parts in life, in every other respect, if at last repulsed from the supreme Judge, with "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity?"—(66.)

Let us judge ourselves, and bring our characters and conduct to God's word to be tried by it; let us beseech him to discover to us the secret motives by which we are actuated, and to prevent our being deceived by Satan or our own hearts, and so lead and guide us in the safe and happy way to everlasting life and happiness.

§ 22. Ver. 22—36. *The baptism of John and of Christ. John's testimony.*

Our Lord, after his discourse with Nicodemus, preached in Judea, and collected followers, and his disciples baptized them. A dispute arose between John's disciples and other Jews respecting the ceremonial washings. Perhaps Christ's disciples having baptized occasioned this, as John's disciples complained to their master that all men came to Jesus, so that he had lost influence and popularity by bearing testimony to him.

It is noted that John was not yet cast into prison. John never desisted from his work so long as he had his liberty; nay, he seems to have been the more industrious, because he foresaw his time was short; he was not yet cast into prison, but he expected it ere long.

It is indeed too true that the spirit which naturally dwelleth in us all lusteth to envy, Jam. 4. 5, and it is far from being a low attainment in religion to look with complacency and thankfulness on the superior abilities and acceptance of others, especially those who once appeared our inferiors. But it is God makes one man to differ from another, and surely it is most unreasonable thus to complain, when we ourselves received all from his bounty. If we are indeed the friends of Christ, we shall rejoice to see souls brought to him, whoever are instruments of promoting the happy work.—(80.)

The complaint of John's disciples respecting Jesus, gave him an opportunity to bear fuller testimony to our Lord. True excellency and sanctifying grace cause deep humility, submission to God, and willing dependence on him. He laid down as a principle that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. He was fully satisfied with the place and work assigned him; and Jesus came on a more important work which superseded his. They knew John had always declared that he was not the Messiah, but merely his servant and forerunner; why then should they be troubled that more honour was rendered to Jesus,

who was the Bridegroom, who would espouse his church, and bless them for ever by that union? John was honoured as a friend of the Bridegroom, employed in collecting disciples, he rejoiced greatly to hear his voice and to witness his glory. His joy was complete now he had heard and seen the promised Messiah, and found that the people flocked to him. He also knew that Jesus would continue to increase in honour and influence, as of his government and peace there would be no end, while he himself would be less considered and followed. John was sensible that this was reasonable and profitable to men, for Jesus came from heaven as the Son of God, and was above all men, angels, or creatures; while he was a mere sinful mortal man, who could only speak concerning the more plain subjects of religion; but Jesus came to speak of heavenly things, in language suitable to them, and as what he had seen and heard. Few were disposed to receive his testimony, but those who acknowledged him as the Messiah, and profited by his instructions, set their seal to the truth of God, declaring their assurance that his word was to be depended upon. The words of Jesus were indeed the words of God, he had the Spirit, not by measure, as the inferior prophets, but in immeasurable fulness, from him to be communicated to all whom he sent.

Former dispensations of the Holy Spirit made partial discoveries of infinite justice and mercy; but now the sum of justice in requiring such a sacrifice, and the plenitude of mercy in providing it, was by that Spirit to be made manifest to all the children of men.—(11.)

The Father loved and delighted in the Son, and in his mediatorial undertaking and work, because they so greatly glorified his name, and therefore committed to him, as Mediator, all authority and judgment. Thus everlasting life could only be had by faith in Him, and might assuredly be thus obtained, whereas every one, who did not believe in the Son of God, could not see life or partake of salvation, but the wrath of God must for ever rest upon them, as it does on the sinner till he believes in Christ.

Let us attend to Him who cometh from above, and is above all, that we may simply receive heavenly things from his testimony; and neither call any one master, nor lean to our own understanding. And

let us seek so to honour his word, that he may seal his salvation to us, by the Spirit of his Son shedding abroad his love in our hearts. This is the only way of everlasting life, through faith in the Son of God, whom the Father loveth, and to whom all things are given, and there is no salvation for sinners in any other.

29. The shoshabin, or paranymp, the friend of the bridegroom, was the person employed in all arrangements relative to the union; his satisfaction to find the bridegroom pleased with the measures he had taken may easily be supposed. John compares himself to one so employed as the forerunner of the Messiah.

31. Is above or "over" all. John the baptist here expressly contrasts his own merely human origin with that of his Lord.

36. "Shall not see life," &c., signifies, shall never possess eternal life, for the wrath of God and the guilt of sin abide on him, they are not removed by the atonement of the Saviour. The whole passage, ver. 27—36, is to be considered the words of the Baptist.

#### CHAPTER IV.

§ 23. Ver. 1—3. *Christ's departure into Galilee.*

Our Lord did not see good to preserve himself by a continued succession of miracles, and the time was yet distant when he would give himself into the hands of his enemies. He seems to have continued in Judea preaching and collecting disciples, till the pharisees took umbrage, then he returned to Galilee. Success of the gospel always displeases unbelievers.

Those whom he made disciples, he baptized; not himself, but by the ministry of his disciples. 1. John baptized as a servant, Christ as a Master. 2. He would apply himself more to preaching which was the more excellent, 1 Cor. 1. 17. 3. He would put honour upon his disciples, by employing them to do it. 4. If he had baptized some himself, they would have been apt to value themselves and despise others. 5. He would reserve himself for baptizing with the Holy Ghost, Acts 1. 5. 6. He would teach us that the efficacy of sacraments depends not on any virtue in the hand that administers them; as also, that what is done by his ministers, according to his direction, he owns as done by himself.

§ 23. Ver. 4—26. *Christ's discourse with the Samaritan woman.*

The Samaritans were the posterity of colonies which the king of Assyria planted in Samaria after the captivity of the ten tribes, with whom many of the land joined themselves. There was great enmity between them and the Jews. Christ's road



from Judea to Galilee lay through the country of Samaria. The wicked and profane are at present so intermixed with God's Israel, that we cannot avoid going through the company of such, 1 Cor. 5. 10. We therefore need the armour of righteousness, that we may neither give provocation to them, nor contract pollution by them. We should not go into places of temptation but when we needs must; and then not reside in them, but hasten through them.

The place was called Sychar; the same with Sichem, or Shechem, a place of which we read much in the Old Testament. We find no mention of Jacob's well there, but the tradition was, that it was Jacob's well.

We have here our Lord Jesus labouring under the common fatigue of travellers. We see that he was truly a man, subject unto the common infirmities of the human nature. Toil came in with sin, Gen. 3. 19, and therefore Christ, having made himself a curse for us, submitted to it. Also that he was a poor man, he went all his journies on foot. When we are carried easily, let us think on the weariness of our Master. We have him here betaking himself to the common relief of travellers; being wearied, he sat *thus* on the well. He sat on the well; he had no couch to repose himself; it teaches us not to be nice and curious in the conveniences of this life. He sat *thus*, without caring about his accommodation, as people that are wearied with travelling, are accustomed to sit. Surely, we ought readily to submit, if called to it, to be like the Son of God in such things as these.

1. Christ discourses with a Samaritan woman concerning the water, ver. 7—15. She comes to draw water. See how the preventing grace of God sometimes brings people unexpectedly under the means of conversion and salvation. His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. This gave Christ an opportunity of discoursing with the woman about spiritual concerns, and he improved it; multitudes crowded after him for instruction, yet here he condescends to teach a single person, a poor woman, a stranger, a Samaritan, to show his ministers to do likewise. It is wisdom to fill up our vacant minutes with that which is good.

Christ asked her for water, he would draw on further discourse with her, and teach us to be willing to be beholden to

the meanest when there is occasion. The woman does not deny his request, yet is surprised because he did not show the anger of his own nation, ver. 9, against the Samaritans. Moderate men of all sides are men wondered at. Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in Divine things, ver. 10. He takes no notice of her objecting the feud between the Jews and Samaritans. Some differences are best healed by avoiding occasions of entering into dispute about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was schismatical, though really it was so, but by showing her ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour. He possesses her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity of gaining what would be of unspeakable advantage.

She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him. Jesus Christ is the gift of God; the richest token of God's love to us, a gift, not a debt which we could demand; a free gift, ch. 3. 16. It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us. Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that saith, Give me to drink; they perceive not that the Lord calls them.

Those that would have benefits from Christ, must be earnest in prayer for them; if we do not seek unto him, it is a sign that we do not know him, Ps. 9, 10. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied to him; He would have given her living or running water. By this living water is meant the Spirit. The Spirit of grace is as living water: see ch. 7. 38. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity. Jesus Christ can and will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask; for he received, that he might give.

The woman objects against the gracious intimation which Christ gave, ver. 11, 12. What he spake figuratively, she took literally. She asks, Whence hast thou this living water? The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him, are secret. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ

has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it. She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than the well. Christ answers this, and shows her, 1. That the water of Jacob's well yielded but very short satisfaction, in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire of water as ever. This speaks our infirmities, and the imperfection of all things in this world; they are not lasting, nor does our satisfaction in them continue. Of whatever waters of comfort we drink, we shall thirst again. 2. That the living waters he would give, should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, ver. 14. Christ's gifts appear most valuable, when compared with the things of this world. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the gospel, shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul. He has a desiring thirst of nothing more than God, still more and more of God; but not a despairing thirst. He never can be reduced to extremity who has in himself a fountain of supply and satisfaction. Ever ready—for it shall be in him. The principle of grace planted in him, is the spring of his comfort: see ch. 7. 38. He need not go to the world for comfort; the work and the witness of the Spirit in the heart, furnish him with an overflowing fountain of joy. Never failing—the principles and affections which Christ forms in the souls of those captivated to the power of his truth, are this well of water. It is springing up, ever in motion, the actings of grace are strong and vigorous. If good truths stagnate in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things. It is springing up unto everlasting life. Spiritual life will continue springing up till it come to perfection. The crown it will receive at last is eternal life. Is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

The woman begs of Jesus to give her some of this water, ver. 15. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful. Even the weak and ignorant may yet have some desires toward Christ, some good wishes for grace and glory. But carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. Give it me, saith she, not that I may have everlasting life, which Christ

proposed, but that I come not hither to draw. The more we are convinced that the well is deep, and that we cannot draw of ourselves, the greater earnestness shall we use in beseeching the Lord to give us the waters of life by the supply of his renewing, comforting Spirit.

2. The next subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning her husband, ver. 16—18. What Christ had said concerning his grace and eternal life, had made little impression upon her, therefore he proceeds to awaken her conscience.

How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction? The carnal mind is very ingenious to shift off convictions, and to keep them from fastening.

How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience? Doubtless, it was not her affliction, but her sin; either she had provoked her husbands to divorce her, or had divorced them. He severely reproves her present state of life.

3. The third subject of discourse with this woman is concerning the place of worship, ver. 19—24. She acknowledges him to be a prophet. The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of Divine authority, 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. She desires further instruction from him. Many who are not angry at their reprovers, yet are afraid of them, and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have more discourse with him who told her of her faults.

Both the Jews and the Samaritans worshipped Jehovah, and considered religious worship of great importance: men would not contend about it, if they were not concerned about it. But the matter in variance, was, where they should worship God. Observe how she states the case for the Samaritans; Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition and succession on their side.

Christ answers to this case of conscience, ver. 21, &c. He slights the question, as she proposed it, concerning the place of worship. I tell thee, the hour is at hand, when it shall be no more a question; that which thou hast been taught to lay so much weight on shall be set aside as a thing indifferent. It should cool our contests, to think that the things we are striving about are passing away. The object of worship is to continue still

the same—God, as a Father; but a period shall be put to all differences about the place of worship. The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where, 1 Tim. 2. 8; Mal. 1. 11. Our reason teaches us to consult decency and convenience in the places of our worship; but our religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect of holiness and acceptableness to God. They who prefer any worship, merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed, though as magnificent and as solemnly consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was, forget that the hour is come, when there shall be no difference put in God's account, no, not between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety.

Christ lays stress upon other things. He did not intend to lessen our concern about the worship itself, therefore he tells the woman that the Samaritans are in the wrong. Ye worship ye know not what, or that which ye do not know; they worshipped the God of Israel the true God, Ezra 4. 2; 2 Kings 17. 32, but as the God of that land, 2 Kings 17. 27. 33, like the gods of the nations.

The Jews were certainly in the right. Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God, know whom they worship. Observe, our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the worshippers of God; We worship. Though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience, in the days of his humiliation.

Salvation is of the Jews; therefore they know whom they worship, and what ground they go upon in their worship. The Author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them, Rom. 9. 5, and is sent first to bless them. The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The word of salvation, Acts 13. 26, was of the Jews. It was derived to other nations through them.

Christ next proceeds to show what is necessary and essential—that we worship God in spirit and in truth, ver. 23, 24. The stress is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but with what mind we worship. They who daily make it their care to worship in the spirit, should not make the place a matter of strife. Christ had justly preferred the

Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of the former. The worship was ceremonial, Heb. 9. 1—10. The worshippers were generally strangers to the inward part of Divine worship. It concerns us to be right, not only in the object of our worship, but in the manner of it; and, that Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

“The hour cometh and now is,” when the promised Saviour should be raised up among the Jews. God was about to be revealed as the Father of all believers in every nation, and he would seek out multitudes to worship him in spirit and in truth. The spirit or the soul of man, as influenced by the Holy Spirit, must worship God, and have communion with him. Spiritual affections, expressed in fervent prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings, form the worship of an upright heart, in which God delights and is glorified. The redemption of Christ, the ministry of the word, and the work of the Holy Spirit, concur in forming such worshippers, and rendering them accepted; and nothing can be pleasing to God that has not in it something of this nature.

4. The woman had nothing to object to this; yet was disposed to leave the matter undecided, till the coming of the Messiah, to give instructions. But our Lord, not being among the Jews who were disposed to excite insurrections, or accuse him to the Romans, without reserve told her that he was indeed the Messiah; doubtless power accompanied his words, which enabled her to believe in him, and to understand the nature of his salvation. And if we now believe in him, we shall, many of us, confess that we were as unworthy, as unlikely, as much prejudiced against him, apparently as far out of his way as this poor Samaritan.

Christ told her, I that speak to thee, am he. See how near Jesus Christ was to her, when she knew not who he was, Gen. 28. 16. Many lament Christ's absence, and long for his presence, when he is speaking to them. See how Christ makes himself known by speaking to us. I that speak unto thee, so closely, so convincingly, with such assurance, with such authority, I am he.

And let us consider this as a proof of the unbounded mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was an alien and a hostile Samaritan, one who was thought to disgrace our Lord Jesus when he spoke to

her. Yet to this woman did our Lord reveal himself more fully than as yet he had done to any of his disciples! How encouraging is this! No *past* iniquities can bar our acceptance with him, if we humble ourselves before him, believing in him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.—(61.)

6. This well is still pointed out; it is dug in a firm rock, about three yards in diameter, and thirty-five deep. See v. 12.

7. Or, a Samaritan; she was of the city of Sychar, a town of Samaria. The hatred of the Jews to the Samaritans was such, that they would rather perish than ask the least favour of them.

12. The value set upon pure water in the east is so great, that the person who procures such a supply is accounted a public benefactor.

14. *J. J. Gurney* observes, that our Lord never more clearly indicated his own Godhead, than here, when he spake of himself as the giver of the Divine Spirit—as the dispenser of that celestial influence, by which the hard and corrupt heart of man is softened, renovated, and purified.

20. Alexander the Great gave Sanballat permission to build a temple on mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans worshipped, in opposition to that of Jerusalem.

22. Our Lord here speaks suitably to the character of a prophet which he then assumed.

§ 23. Ver. 27-42. *The effects of Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria.*

The disciples wondered that Christ talked thus with a Samaritan, one who was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Yet they knew it was for some good reason, and some good end, of which he was not bound to give them an account. Thus when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves that all is well which Jesus Christ says and does.

The woman gave notice to her neighbours of the extraordinary person she had met with, ver. 28, 29. Notice is taken of her leaving her water-pot, as one careless of it, being wholly taken up with what Christ had said. Observe,

1. How anxious she was to bring her friends and neighbours acquainted with Christ. Those who have been themselves with Jesus, and have found comfort in him, should do all they can to bring others to him. 2. How ingenuous she was in the notice she gave them concerning the stranger. He told her that which none knew but God and her own conscience. Two things affected her, (1.) The extent of his knowledge. We ourselves cannot tell all things that ever we did; many things pass unheeded, and more pass away and are forgotten; but Jesus

Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men, see Heb. 4. 13. (2.) The power of his word. This made a great impression upon her, that he told her secret sins with such power and energy. She does not say, Come, see a man that has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem, a man that calls himself the Messiah; but, Come, see a man that has told me of my sins! She fastens upon that part of Christ's discourse, which one would think she should have been most shy of repeating; but experimental proofs of the power of Christ's word and Spirit are of all others the most convincing; and that knowledge of Christ into which we are led by conviction of sin, is most likely to be sound and saving.

She invites them to come and see him of whom she had formed so high an opinion. Those who can do little else toward the conviction and conversion of others, may and should bring them to those means of grace which they themselves have found effectual. She resolves to appeal to themselves, Is not this the Christ? By such fair, but forcible appeals men's judgments and consciences are sometimes taken hold of. They went to him; it pleased God to incline their hearts to notice her report. They came to him; those who would know Christ, must meet him where he records his name.

While the woman was thus employed, the disciples were earnest with Jesus to eat, but he was so much engaged in the labour of love before him, that he thought no more of weariness, hunger, or thirst. When we consider the Lord Jesus deeming his hardships, his labours, and his whole work and sufferings on earth, as more pleasant to him than his necessary food, we may be encouraged the more confidently to come to him: we should also consider him as our example, and, in our lesser services and lighter trials, it should be our meat also to do the will of God and to finish his work.

Our Master has herein left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; with diligence and close-application, as those that make a business of it; with delight and pleasure in it, as in our element; and with constancy and perseverance, not only minding to do, but aiming to finish our work.

Christ compares his work to harvest work. They knew that it was about four

months to the harvest, yet if they looked up and saw the Samaritans coming to hear his doctrine, they would see that the fields were white unto a better harvest. This kind of harvest was far more important than any other; not only would the laborious reaper be graciously rewarded with eternal life, but those who were converted by his labours would be as fruit gathered unto the same blessedness, and while many assisted in one way or other, both would at last rejoice together in their success. This was the good work in which Jesus meant to employ them as well as to labour himself. He was about to send them forth to preach in his name. The labours of the ancient prophets, of John Baptist, and especially his own ministry, would render their work comparatively easy, and they would be abundantly successful; thus they would reap the harvest of other men's labours.

The harvest is before appointed and expected; so was the gospel. Harvest-time is busy time; all must be then at work; ministers must work for God, to gather souls to him, that they may reap the graces and comforts of the gospel. Harvest-time is opportunity, a short and limited time, which will not last always; and harvest-work is work that must be done then, or not at all; so the time of the enjoyment of the gospel is a particular season, which must be improved for its proper purposes; if once past, it cannot be recalled. Even small success will render this the most gainful employment in the world. Faithful ministers sometimes labour long, apparently with little success; but the seed is not lost, for others enter into their labours, and in consequence gain over many souls unto Christ; and in that world where selfishness will be no more, all will unite in rejoicing over that to which they were instrumental.

See the good effect this had upon the Samaritans, ver. 39—42. Observe who believed—many of the Samaritans. Their faith not only aggravated the unbelief of the Jews, but was an earnest of the faith of the Gentiles. Upon what inducement they believed—for the saying of the woman. God is sometimes pleased to use very weak and unlikely instruments for the beginning and carrying on of a good work. Our Saviour, by instructing one poor woman, spread instruction to a whole town. Let not ministers either be careless in their preaching, or discouraged,

because their hearers are few and mean; by doing good to them, good may be conveyed to more. See how good it is to speak experimentally of Christ and the things of God. This woman could say little of Christ, but what she did say she spake feelingly; He told me all that ever I did. Those are most likely to do good, that can tell what God has done for their souls, Ps. 66. 16.

When they were come to Jesus, they besought him that he would tarry with them, the meanness of his appearance did not lessen their expectations, but still they respected him as a prophet. Blessed are they that are not offended at Christ at the first sight. Those that are taught of God, are truly desirous to learn more. It adds much to the praise of our love to Christ and his word, if it conquers the prejudices of education and custom.

He abode there but two days; he had other places to visit and other work to do. What he said and did there is not related; but it is intimated, in the effect, that he said and did what convinced them that he was the Christ; and the labours of a minister are best told by the good fruit of them.

In three things their faith grew.

1. In the matter of it. They believed him to be the Saviour, not only of the Jews, but of the world, which would include them, though Samaritans; it was promised that he should be Salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa. 49. 6.

2. In the certainty of it. We know that this is indeed the Christ, truly; not a pretended Christ, but a real one. Such an assurance as this of Divine truths, is what we should labour after; not only, We think it probable, and are willing to suppose Jesus may be the Christ; but, We know that he is indeed the Christ.

3. In the ground of it, which was spiritual experience; now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves. They had before believed for her saying, and it was well; but now they find further and much firmer footing for their faith.

In this instance we may see how faith comes by hearing. The instructions of parents and preachers, and the testimony of the church and our experienced neighbours, recommend the doctrine of Christ to us, and incline us to entertain it. But faith comes to strength and maturity, by hearing the testimony of Christ him-

self. We are induced to look into the scriptures by the words of those who tell us that in them they have found eternal life; but when we ourselves have found it in them too, have experienced the enlightening, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting power of the word, now we believe, not for their saying, but because we have searched them ourselves: and our faith stands, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. 2. 5; 1 John 5. 9, 10.

O Lord, let us never forget it is to thy labours, thy sufferings, thy blood, that every redeemed soul owes its salvation; let all the praise, therefore, be wholly ascribed to thee.—(83.)

27. Or, "With a woman." *Lightfoot* shows that it was then disreputable for a man to talk publicly with a woman.

§ 24. Ver. 43—52. *Christ heals the nobleman's son.*

Christ would not go to Nazareth, because he knew how little respect he should have there. It is just with God to deny his gospel to those that despise the ministers of it. Other Galileans cheerfully attended on his doctrine. Christ and his gospel are not sent in vain; if they have not honour with some, they shall have it with others. They had seen the miracles he did at Jerusalem. Those diligent in attending on public ordinances, some time or other meet with more spiritual benefit than they expect.

His curing the nobleman's son that was sick of a fever is not recorded by any other evangelist. Observe, the father a nobleman, and yet the son sick. Dignities and titles of honour will be no security to persons and families from the assaults of sickness and death. He went to Jesus himself, and besought him to come and heal his son. The greatest men, when they come to God, must become beggars, and plead as paupers.

As to the errand he came upon, we may observe a mixture in his faith. There was sincerity in it; he believed that Christ could heal his son. Yet there was infirmity in his faith; as it should seem, he thought Jesus could not heal him at a distance. Thus are we apt to limit the Holy One of Israel. We are encouraged to pray, but we are not allowed to prescribe; Lord, heal me; but whether with a word or a touch, thy will be done.

Observe what is blamed by Christ, that the spiritual power of the word did not

affect the Jews, did not attract them, but only the sensible power of miracles. Those that admire miracles only, and despise prophesying, rank with unbelievers.

The nobleman prosecuted his request till he prevailed. But he still discovered weakness of faith in the power of Christ. It is hard to persuade ourselves that distance of time and place are no obstructions to the knowledge and power of our Lord Jesus. Observe, what haste he is in; Come down, ere my child die; as if there were danger of Christ's being too late. He that believeth, does not make haste, but refers himself to Christ. Lord, what, and when, and how, thou pleasest.

Christ gave an answer of peace: an instance, 1. Of his power. Here is nothing said or done, nothing ordered to be done, and yet the cure wrought. This nobleman would have Christ come down and heal his son. Christ will heal his son, and not come down. And thus the cure is the sooner wrought, the nobleman's mistake rectified, and his faith confirmed. When he denies what we ask, he gives what is much more to our advantage; we ask for ease, he gives patience. Christ's saying, Thy soul lives, makes it alive. 2. Of his pity; the nobleman's natural affection discovered itself in his words, Ere my child, my dear child die; therefore Christ dropped the reproof, and gave assurance of the recovery of his child; he knows how a father pities his children.

The nobleman was satisfied with the method Christ took. How quickly is that which is lacking in our faith, perfected by the word and power of Christ! He sees no sign or wonder, and yet believes the wonder done. Christ said, Thy son liveth, and the man believed him; like the father of the faithful, against hope he believed in hope, and staggered not through unbelief. Christ said, Go thy way; and, as an evidence of the sincerity of his faith, he went his way. He did not press Christ to come. As one entirely satisfied, he did not hurry home that night, but returned as one perfectly easy in his own mind.

His servants met him with the news of the child's recovery. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word. He inquired what hour the child began to recover. It is good to furnish ourselves with proofs and evidences to strengthen our faith in the word of Christ, that it may grow up to full assurance. Show

me a token for good. Diligent comparing the works of Christ with his word will be of great use to us for confirming our faith. Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him; so the father knew that it was at the same hour, when Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth. As the word of God, well studied, will help us to understand his providences; so the providence of God, well observed, helps us to understand his word. It was done just at the same time that Christ spake to him. The manner in which events mutually affect each other adds very much to the beauty and harmony of Providence. Observe the time; at the very time when it is promised, as Israel's deliverance, Exod. 12. 41. In men's works, distance of place is delay of time; but not so in the works of Christ. The pardon, and peace, and comfort, and spiritual healing which he speaks in heaven, is, if he pleases, at the same time effected and wrought in the souls of believers.

The bringing the cure to the family brought salvation to it. The nobleman had believed the word of Christ, with reference to this occasion; but now he believed in Christ as the Messiah promised. This particular experience of the power and efficacy of one word of Christ may settle the whole authority of Christ's dominion in the soul. Christ many ways gains the heart, and by grant of temporal mercy may make way for better things.

The whole family believed likewise. The miracle affected them all, and endeared Christ to them. A master of a family cannot give faith to those under his charge, nor force them to believe, but he may be instrumental to remove prejudices. What a blessed change occasioned by the sickness of the child! This should reconcile us unto afflictions; we know not what good may follow from them. Probably the conversion of this nobleman and his family at Capernaum, might invite Christ to come afterward, and settle in that city, as his usual abode in Galilee. When great men receive the gospel, they may be instrumental to bring it to the places where they live.

The evangelist remarks upon this cure, This is the second miracle; referring to ch. 2. 11, where the turning water into wine is said to be the first. In like manner the knowledge of Christ still spreads through families, and men find health and salvation to their souls. These miracles

never cease; may we apply to Jesus, and experience them for our good.

May thy power, O Lord, so work upon our souls that we all may be disposed cordially to receive thee, and to venture our all upon thee. May we and our families unite in this, and, not seeking evidence beyond what thy gracious wisdom has given, may we improve the light we enjoy.—(80.)

## CHAPTER V.

§ 32. Ver. 1—9. *The cure at the pool of Bethesda.*

This cure was wrought at a feast of the Jews, probably the passover. Christ, though residing in Galilee, went up to Jerusalem at the feast, because it was an ordinance of God; thus he would teach us to attend religious assemblies, Heb. 10. 25: and because it was an opportunity of doing good, for there were great numbers gathered together there at that time.

This cure was wrought at the pool of Bethesda, which had a miraculous healing virtue in it. It was a pool, called in Hebrew, Bethesda, or the house of mercy, for therein appeared much of the mercy of God to the sick and diseased. It had five porches, cloisters, piazzas, or roofed walks. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! It may do us good to visit hospitals sometimes, that we may be led from the calamities of others to thank God for our comforts. Those that were sick of bodily diseases, took the pains to come far, and had the patience to wait long for a cure. O that men were as wise for their souls, and as solicitous to have their spiritual diseases healed! We are all by nature impotent folk in spiritual things, blind, halt, and withered; but effectual provision is made for our cure, if we attend to it.

An angel went down, and troubled the water; whoever first stepped in, was made whole; not daily, perhaps not frequently, but at a certain season, as Infinite Wisdom saw fit. Whoever first stepped in was made whole. Here is, 1. The miraculous extent of the virtue; what disease soever it was, this water cured it, even diseases that came from contrary causes. 2. A miraculous limitation; he that first stepped in only had benefit. This teaches us to observe and improve our opportunities, that we slip

not a season which may never return. The angel stirred the waters, but left the diseased to themselves to get in. God has put virtue into the scriptures and ordinances; if we do not make due improvement of them, it is our own fault.

This is all the account we have; it is uncertain when the miracle began, and when it ceased; however, it certainly was a token of God's good will to that people, and indicated, that, though they had been long without prophets and miracles, God had not yet cast them off. It was also a type of the Messiah, who is the Fountain opened; and was intended to raise expectation of him, who is the Sun of righteousness, that arises with healing under his wings. These waters probably had formerly been used for purifying, now they were of use for healing, signifying both the cleansing and curing virtue of the blood of Christ, which heals all our diseases. The laver of regeneration is to us as Bethesda's pool, healing our spiritual diseases; not at certain seasons, but at all times. Whosoever will, let him come.

The man on whom this cure was wrought, had lost the use of his limbs thirty-eight years. Shall we complain of one wearisome night, who, perhaps, for many years have scarcely known what it has been to be a day sick, when many others, better than we, have scarcely known what it has been to be a day well?

Jesus saw him lie. There was a great multitude of poor cripples at Bethesda, but Christ singled this one out from the rest. He knew, and considered how long he had lain in this condition. Those that have been long in affliction, may comfort themselves with this, that God keeps account how long, and knows our frame. He asked him, Wilt thou be made whole? Some indeed will not be made whole, because their sores serve for an excuse for idleness. Christ put it to him, to teach him to value the mercy, and to excite in him desires after it. In spiritual cases, people are not willing to be cured of their sins, are loth to part with them.

The poor, impotent man does not think of any other way of being cured than by these waters, and complains for want of friends to help him in. To the sick and impotent, it is as true a piece of charity to work for them, as to relieve them; and thus even the poorest are capable of being charitable to one another, and ought to be so. He bewails his unhappiness, that

very often when he was coming, another stepped in before him. Having been often disappointed, he begins to despair, and now is Christ's time to come to his relief. Observe, this man speaks of the unkindness of those about him without any peevish reflections. As we should be thankful for the least kindness, so we should be patient under the greatest contempts. Observe further, to his praise, that, though he had waited so long in vain, yet still he continued lying by the pool-side, hoping that some time or other help would come, Hab. 2. 3.

Our Lord Jesus cures him, though he neither asked nor thought of it. Here is, 1. The word said. He is bidden to rise and walk; it was a command to the disease to be gone, but it is expressed as a command to the man. The conversion of a sinner is the cure of a chronical disease; this is ordinarily done by the word, a word of command; Arise, and walk; Turn and live; Make ye a new heart; which no more supposes power in us without the grace of God, distinguishing grace, than this supposed such power in the impotent man. But if he had not attempted to help himself, he had not been cured; yet it does not therefore follow, that, when he did rise and walk, it was by his own strength; no, it was by the power of Christ, and he must have all the glory. He is bidden to take up his bed, to show it was a perfect and miraculous cure. He who one minute was not able to turn in his bed, the next minute was able to carry his bed. It was to make the cure public; for, being the sabbath-day, whoever carried a burden made himself remarkable; thereby the notice of the miracle would spread. Christ also would thus witness against the tradition of the elders, who had stretched the law of the sabbath beyond its intention; and would likewise show that he was Lord of the sabbath. It may be a work of necessity, or mercy, to carry a bed on the sabbath-day; but here it was a work of piety, being for the glory of God. He would hereby try the faith and obedience of his patient. By carrying his bed publicly, he exposed himself to the censure of the priests and rulers. He will run that risk in obedience to Christ. Those who have been healed by Christ's word, should be ruled by his word, whatever it cost them.

2. The efficacy of this word. Divine power went with it, immediately he was



made whole; took up his bed and walked. He felt the power of Christ's word healing him. What joyful surprise to the poor cripple, to find himself of a sudden so easy, so strong, so able to help himself! He obeyed the power of Christ's word commanding him, and did not care who blamed, or threatened him for it. The proof of spiritual cure, is our rising and walking. Hath Christ healed our spiritual diseases? Let us go wherever he sends us, and take up whatever he is pleased to lay upon us; and walk before him.

Though multiplied miracles of converting grace are not generally manifested among us, we still see instances of some who, by washing in the Fountain which God hath opened, are made whole of their desperate maladies.

4. Many writers have endeavoured to explain this account of the pool of Bethesda, by natural causes, in a greater or less degree. But after all their attempts, the words must be retained and interpreted in their usual sense: and the circumstances so minutely recorded, show that the cures must have been miraculous. It is evident from the number of miserable objects lying there, that some extraordinary benefit was expected by them. *Lampe* considers that God having withdrawn the other outward signs of his presence, would thereby testify that he had not laid aside all care for his people. Many of the ancient versions read, "an angel of the Lord."

5. *Baxter's* note on this verse is very affecting. "How great a mercy is it to live eight and thirty years under God's wholesome discipline! How inexcusable was this man if he had been proud, or worldly, or careless of his everlasting state! O my God, I thank thee for the like discipline of eight and fifty years! How safe a life is this in comparison with full prosperity and pleasure!"

§ 32. Ver. 10-16. *The Jews' displeasure.*

The Jews blamed the man for carrying his bed on the sabbath-day. The man justified himself in that he did it in obedience to One, who, by making him whole, had given an undeniable proof that he is greater than the law and the sabbath, and he could not think He would command him to do any thing sinful. They inquired who it was, but Jesus had so speedily withdrawn that the man knew him not. Soon after Jesus met the man in the temple, where we may hope he had gone to render thanks for his cure, and called his attention to the unmerited benefit he had received, warning him to sin no more, lest worse evil should befall him.

Christ intimates that those who are eased of the punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin, when the

terror and restraint are over, unless Divine grace dry up the fountain. The misery believers are made whole from, warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin. This is the voice of every providence, Go, and sin no more. Christ saw it necessary to give this caution; for it is common for people, when sick, to promise much; when newly-recovered, to perform only something; but after a while to forget all.

As the man had been grievously afflicted thirty-eight years, we cannot easily conceive a worse temporal evil should befall him. Doubtless, Christ spoke of the wrath to come, which is infinitely worse; and yet cannot be avoided if men continue in sin or return to it. Without deliverance from the love, power, and allowed practice of known sin, there can be no well-grounded hope of escaping the wrath to come. Even in this life how many hours nay weeks and years of pain do some wicked men endure in consequence of their momentary unlawful indulgences! And if such afflictions are severe, how dreadful will be the everlasting punishment of the wicked! The man then went and told the Jews to whom he owed his cure, and they instead of honouring Jesus, accused him as a sabbath-breaker! It is likely that he was brought before the sanhedrim, and spoke what follows before that assembly: this view of the subject makes it the more interesting.

§ 32. Ver. 17-22. *Christ answers the Jews and reproves them.*

In answer to the accusation here brought, our Lord observed, that his Father worked hitherto and he worked. Thus he called God his Father in a peculiar sense, and claimed the prerogative of acting as he did, without being limited by the laws laid down for his creatures. God continually worketh in upholding the universe, and the Son concurs by a union of will and operation. His work as Mediator was to be continued by the same unceasing action, and he claimed the prerogative of working on his holy day, as the work of Providence is carried on upon every day alike. The Divine power of the miracle proved Jesus to be the Son of God, and he insisted upon working with, and like unto his Father, as he saw good, without being called to an account. These ancient enemies of Christ understood him, and became more violent, charging him not only with sabbath-breaking but blas-

phemy, in calling God his own Father, and making himself equal with God.

In answer Jesus solemnly assured them that the Son could do nothing of himself—nothing apart from what the Father doeth, for they are one in nature, will, counsel, and operation, so that it is equally proper to ascribe them to the Son as to the Father. For the Father perfectly loveth the Son, and communicates all his counsels to him, but would show his beloved Son greater works than the miracles they had seen, that by the displays of his Divine glory they might be astonished, even if they were not induced to believe in him. For as God is able to raise the dead to life, of which some examples were recorded in the scriptures, they should see the Son also raising the dead; an emblem of his restoring to spiritual life those dead in sin. All things now, and at the final judgment, were committed to the Son, purposely that all men might honour the Son, as they honour the Father. Men of all nations, who really understand and obey the gospel, will thus honour the Son as coequal with the Father; and every one who does not *thus* honour the Son, whatever he may think or pretend, does not honour the Father who sent him, but sets up a creature of his own imagination, or proud reasonings, in his place. To refuse Divine honour and worship to Him who is thus One with the Father, because of his infinite grace and condescension in taking human nature, that he might save rebellious men, is the greatest perversity and ingratitude.

17. The question between our Lord and the Jews, turned on his right to perform works on the day divinely appointed for cessation from labour. He adduced the example of God the Father, who carries on the works of providence and grace without any sabbatic rest, and asserts his right to do the same.—*J. P. Smith.* In Gen. 2. 2, the works of creation are spoken of. With respect to the carrying the bed, it has been remarked that our Lord usually connected some circumstance with a miracle which attested its truth.

§ 32. Ver. 24—29. *Christ's discourse.*

Our Lord here proceeded to declare most explicitly his mediatorial authority and character, as the Messiah, but not in terms for which the Jews could accuse him to the Romans. He assured them solemnly that everlasting life was entirely at his disposal. That every one who believed in the Father as revealed by him, had the beginning of eternal life. And having passed from a state of

spiritual death and misery, into a state of acceptance and peace with God, and the life of faith and grace, he would be preserved from falling into sin, or continuing therein, and dying without repentance and forgiveness. He further assured them that the time was come when the dead should hear his voice, as the Son of God, and live. This may refer to raising the dead, but rather signifies his raising those who were dead in sin, to newness of life, by his doctrine attended by the power of the Spirit.

A mere creature cannot have life in himself, in the same sense as the eternal, self-existent Father, and for communicating it to others, as is evidently meant, ver. 26. But that the Son of God, one with the Father, should have it given to him as Mediator, for the benefit of those who were dead in sin, and whose security he became, is to be understood, for this was to have life in himself. The Father also hath given him to execute judgment, for the punishment of his enemies and the salvation of his people, because he, the Son of God, was also become the Son of man. The office of Judge of all men must require all knowledge and almighty power, and infinite perfections, which cannot be possessed by any mere creature. He added, they need not show such astonishment; the time approached when the multitude of the dead should hear his voice, when all would be raised up, and come forth to eternal life or to damnation. Those who have repented, believed in Christ, and by his grace learn to love and obey him, are those who have done good, though defective and defiled. But the impenitent, who go on doing evil, will arise to everlasting punishment. Is it possible that Jesus could have used such language, had he not intended his disciples to understand that he was Almighty God, dwelling in our nature, and manifest in the flesh? Unless, therefore, we could honour the Father too much, we need not fear honouring the Son more than we ought. There is no danger of excess, but much of defect. May we believe His testimony; thus our faith and hope will be in God, and we shall not come into condemnation. And may His voice reach the hearts of those dead in sin; that they may do works meet for repentance, and prepare for the solemn day of retribution. May we now live as those who desire then to be found a people prepared for the Lord.

37. Here, as in most places where Christ calls himself the Son of man, the allusion is either to his present humiliation or his future glory. Thus we have a strong declaration that the human nature did not originally belong to Him.—*Bloomfield.*

§ 32. Ver. 30—38. *Christ's discourse.*

Our Lord here returns to his declaration of the entire agreement between the Father and the Son, and by using the first person he declared himself the Son of God. It was impossible that he should do any thing in his work as Mediator, from any motive, to any end, or by any power, diverse from those of the Father. In none of his actions did he seek his own will as man, but that of the Father. There was another who bare witness to him, even the Father, who bare testimony by John, and in various other ways. They had sent unto John, who had testified that he was the Son of God. He needed not man's testimony, though it was worthy their serious attention; and while they sought his life, he would make the means he used effectual to the salvation of some of them. John indeed, by his holy life, his warmth of zeal, his clear instructions, and patient labours, had been a burning and a shining light, and for a time they had attended to him, though at last they rejected his testimony concerning Jesus, and forsook his ministry. But he had superior testimony to that of John; the works, already begun in the miracles he wrought, and which he should remain to finish, notwithstanding their purpose of killing him, sufficiently attested all he had said of his dignity and authority. Nay, the Father had borne witness to him by a voice from heaven at his baptism. This was a witness attended with such a display of the Divine presence and glory, as never had been heard or seen respecting any of their prophets, and it was the highest that could be imagined, as none could see the form, or hear the voice of the Father in any other, or in a more evident manner. This seems to intimate that all the appearances of Jehovah to their ancestors, and his speaking to them, were to be understood of Him, the Son of God. His word, it was evident, had no abiding place in their hearts, as they refused to believe in Him whom the Father had sent according to his ancient promises. Let none treat these things as conjectures. Not only the works which Christ finished on earth bare witness to him as the Son of

God, but those also which he hath wrought since his ascension into heaven, in the success of the gospel. The voice of God, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, thus made effectual to the conversion of sinners, still proclaims that this is the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well-pleased, and all who would be saved must hear and obey him. But when the hearts of men are full of pride, ambition, and the love of the world, there is no room for the word of God to abide in them.

30. Our Lord's declaration, "I can of mine own self do nothing," strongly implies the oneness of nature and attributes, between the Father and the Son.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 32. Ver. 39—44. *Christ's discourse.*

The Jews considered that eternal life was revealed to them in their scriptures. They fancied they had it as it were in possession, because they had the word of God in their hands. Jesus exhorted them to search those scriptures with more diligence and attention.

It may be read, either, 1. Ye do search the scriptures—and ye do well to do so; ye read them daily in your synagogues, ye have doctors and scribes, who study them, and criticise upon them. Christ owns that they did indeed search the scriptures, but it was in search of their own glory. Ye do search the scriptures, and therefore, if ye were not wilfully blind, ye would believe in me. It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the scripture, and yet to be strangers to the power and influence of it. Or, 2. Search the scriptures—and so, it was spoken to them in the nature of an *appeal*. Ye profess to receive and believe the scripture, let that be the judge, provided you will search into it. Search all the books of scripture throughout, compare one passage with another, and explain one by another. We must likewise search particular passages, and see, not what they seem to say at the first appearance, but, what they say indeed. It is spoken to us in the nature of an *advice*, or command to all Christians to search the scriptures. All who would find Christ, must search the scriptures; not only read them, and hear them, but search them; which denotes diligence in seeking, and study, and close application of mind. Also, the desire and design of finding.

Two things we are here directed to have in view in searching the scriptures.—Heaven our end, and Christ our Way.

1. We must search the scriptures for heaven as our great end; For in them ye think ye have eternal life. The scripture assures us of an eternal state set before us, and offers to us an eternal life in that state; it describes the way that leads to it, and the foundation upon which the hope of it is built; surely this is worth searching for, especially as we are sure to find it. But to the Jews Christ saith only, Ye think ye have eternal life in the scriptures; because they looked for it by the mere reading and studying of the scripture. They thought they were sure of heaven, if they could say by rote such passages of scripture as they were directed to by the tradition of the elders.

2. We must search the scriptures for Christ, as the new and living Way that leads to this end. Those are they, the great and principal witnesses, that testify of him. The scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Christ, and by them God bears witness to him. The Spirit of Christ the prophets testified beforehand of him, 1 Pet. 1. 11, the purposes and promises of God concerning him, and the previous notices of him. The Jews knew very well that the Old Testament testified of the Messiah, and were critical in their remarks upon those passages, yet were careless in the application of them. We must search the scriptures, and may hope to find eternal life in that search, because they testify of Christ; for this is life eternal, to know him.

Those who peruse the sacred volume merely for amusement by its histories, to beguile time, or for the performance of an outward duty, are deficient in their motives, and cannot expect to derive from it either advantage or comfort. Nor will it suffice to read the scriptures merely to become acquainted with sacred truths, without desire to be actuated thereby.—(33.)

To this testimony Christ annexes reproofs of their infidelity and wickedness.

1. Their neglect of him and his doctrine, ver. 40; Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. Their estrangement from Christ was the fault, not so much of their understandings as of their wills. Christ offered life, and they would not accept it. There is life to be had with Jesus Christ for poor souls; we may have life, the life of pardon and grace, and comfort and glory; and Christ is our Life. Those that would have this life, must come to Jesus Christ for it; we may have

it if we come for it. Sinners die because they will not come to Christ for life and happiness; not because they *cannot*, but because they *will not*. They will neither accept the life offered, because spiritual and divine; nor will they agree to the terms on which it is offered; nor apply to the use of appointed means: they will not be cured, for they will not observe the methods of cure.

The words, ver. 41, I receive not honour from men, obviate an objection, as if Christ sought his own glory. He did not covet or court the applause of men; or that worldly pomp and splendour in which the carnal Jews expected their Messiah to appear. He needed not the applause of men; it was no addition to his glory, whom all the angels of God worship.

2. Their want of the love of God; ver. 42; I know you very well, that you have not the love of God in you. They pretended great love to God by their zeal for the law, the temple, and the sabbath; yet were really without the love of God. There are many who make a great profession of religion, who yet show they want the love of God, by their neglect of Christ and their contempt of his commandments; they hate his holiness, and undervalue his goodness. It is the love of God in us, the love that is seated in the heart, and is a living active principle there, that God will accept; the love shed abroad there, Rom. 5. 5. Christ knew how corrupt their inside was, notwithstanding the plausible shows of their outside; we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive him.

3. Another crime charged upon them is, their readiness to entertain false Christs and false prophets, while they obstinately opposed him who was the true Messiah, ver. 43. They forsake their own mercies, that is bad enough, and it is for lying vanities, that is worse.

4. They are here charged with pride, and vain-glory, and unbelief, the effect of it, ver. 44. They slighted and undervalued Christ, *because* they admired and over-valued themselves. Here is their ambition of worldly honour. Ye look for a Messiah to come in outward pomp, and promise yourselves worldly honour by him. Also, their neglect of spiritual honour, called here the honour that comes from God only. Those who will not come to Christ, and those who are ambitious of worldly honour, make it appear that they seek not the honour that comes from God,

and it is their folly and ruin. How can they believe, who make the praise and applause of men their idol? When the profession and practice of serious godliness are unfashionable, and are every where spoken against, when Christ and his followers are men wondered at, how can they believe, the utmost of whose ambition is to make a fair show in the flesh?

39. It is a question whether these words are to be read in the indicative, or in the imperative mood. But the sense in either case is the same. It is well known that the Jews were exceedingly diligent in studying the letter of scripture, especially at that time, and we may suppose our Lord admitted this, and reminded them that they professed to search the scriptures, which testified concerning him, and yet they would not acknowledge him as the Saviour. The reference to the practice of the Jews, renders this passage a testimony against those who would repress the study of the scriptures, as strong as if it is taken as a command. The word rendered "search" is very strong, and implies very ardent and close investigation.

44. The pharisees were much addicted to self praise, and greedy of applause.

§ 32. Ver. 45-47. *Christ's discourse.*

Our Lord further observed, that there was no occasion for him to become the accuser of the unbelieving Jews to his Father; nor was this the end of his coming amongst them; for they had another accuser, even Moses, in whose law they trusted for salvation. Yet his writings, which were full of types, prophecies, and promises of Christ would certainly condemn them. Had they really believed the testimony of Moses, they would certainly have welcomed the Prophet of whom he wrote, and whose doctrine was so opposed to their pride and lusts. Though our Lord spake thus openly on this occasion, his persecutors were overawed; they proceeded no further against him, because his time was not yet come.

Alas, how many trust in their attachment to some form of doctrine or party; who no more enter into the real meaning of those doctrines, or the views of the persons whose names they bear, than the Jews did into those of Moses! Let us then search and pray over the scriptures, as men intent on finding eternal life; let us observe how Christ is the great subject of them, and daily apply to him for the life he bestows. Let us seek that honour which cometh from God only, and not fear the reproach of men. By patient continuance in well doing let us seek for glory, honour, and immortal happiness.

## CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1-13. M. 14 13-21. Mk. 6.32-44. L. 9.10-17. Ver. 15-21. M. 14-22-33. Mk. 6.45-53.

§ 63. Ver. 1-14. *Five thousand miraculously fed.*

John, who does not usually relate what had been recorded by those who wrote before him, relates this miracle, for its reference to the following discourse.

Christ's miracles drew many after him, who were not effectually drawn to him. He went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples, that he might more conveniently be seen and heard by the multitude. He saw a great company come to him, poor, mean, ordinary people, no doubt; but the souls of the poor are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as those of the rich.

See the weakness of Philip's faith, who in this strait, as if the master of the family had been an ordinary person, looked for supply only in an ordinary way. We are apt thus to distrust God's power.

Christ received information from another of his disciples concerning the provision they had. It was Andrew. We may see the strength of his love to those for whom he saw his Master concerned, in that he was willing to bring out all they had. Barley bread is what Christ had, and better than we deserve. Distrustful fear of wanting ourselves, should not hinder us from needful charity to others.

In the distribution of the provision, observe, Christ gave thanks.

1. We ought to thank God for our food, it is a mercy to have it, and this is the sweetness of our creature-comforts, that they give occasion for thanksgiving. Though we have neither plenty nor dainty, yet let us thank God for what we have.

2. It was distributed from the hand of Christ by the hands of his disciples. All our comforts come to us originally from the hand of Christ; whoever brings them, it is he that sends them.

3. It was done to universal satisfaction. All had as much as they would; a full meal. Those whom Christ feeds with the bread of life, he does not stint, Ps. 81. 10. There were but two small fishes, yet they had of them as much as they would.

When they were filled, Christ said to the disciples, Gather up the fragments. The Jews were careful not to lose any

bread, nor let it be trodden upon. "He who despises bread, falls into the depths of poverty," was a saying among them. Though Christ could command supplies whenever he pleased, yet he would have the fragments gathered up. Those that would have wherewith to be charitable, must be provident. That which is fit to be food for men, is wasted and lost, if thrown to the brutes.

They filled twelve baskets with the fragments; which was evidence not only of the truth of the miracle, that they were fed with real food, witness those remains, but of the greatness of it; they were not only satisfied, but there was all this over and above.

To lose any useful food is a sin against God. Where there is the greatest plenty, no fragments should be lost while the poor need to have them. How much less should we lose God's word, or helps, as ordinances, or our time, or any such greater mercies!—(3.)

Observe the influence this miracle had upon the people who had tasted the benefit; they said, This is of a truth that Prophet. Even the common Jews expected the Messiah to come into the world, and to be a great Prophet. The pharisees despised them as not knowing the law; but, it seems they knew most of Him who is the End of the law. Such wretched incoherence and inconsistency there is in the faculties of the corrupt, unsanctified soul, that it is possible for men to acknowledge Christ as that Prophet, and yet to turn a deaf ear to him.

10. "Now there was much grass in the place." *Paley* observes, This little incidental circumstance shows that the narrator was an eyewitness of what he describes.

§ 64. Ver. 15—21. *Jesus walks on the sea.*

Christ retired, because he perceived that they who acknowledged him to be the Prophet that should come into the world, would take him by force, to make him a King, ver. 15. This was an act of zeal for the honour of Christ, and against the contempt which the ruling part of the Jewish church put upon him. But it was irregular zeal; it was grounded upon a mistake concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were to be of this world, and he must appear with outward pomp. Right notions of Christ's kingdom would keep us to right methods for advancing it. They wished to make him their King, who could feed them so plentifully, with-

out their toil. It was to carry on a secular design; they hoped this might be a good opportunity for shaking off the Roman yoke. Thus religion is often directed to forward a secular interest. Augustine says, Jesus is usually sought after for something else, not for his own sake.

When evening was come, the disciples embarked and sailed for Capernaum. This they did by particular direction from their Master, to send them out of the way of the temptation of countenancing those who would have made him a King. They were Christ's disciples, and were in the way of their duty, and Christ was praying for them; yet they were in distress. The perils and afflictions of this present time may very well consist with an interest in Christ and his intercession. Clouds and darkness sometimes surround the children of the light and of the day. They see Jesus walking on the sea. See here,

1. The power Christ has over the laws of nature; Christ walked upon the water as upon dry land.
2. Christ will not leave his disciples comfortless when in distress.
3. They were more afraid of an apparition, for so they supposed him to be, than of the winds and waves. It is more terrible to wrestle with the rulers of the darkness of this world than with a tempestuous sea. Our real distresses are often much increased by imaginary ones. Even the approaches of comfort and deliverance often are so misconstrued, as to become the occasions of fear and perplexity. But when they were in this fright, how affectionately did Christ silence their fears with his compassionate words, It is I, be not afraid! Nothing is more powerful to convince sinners than that word, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; nothing more powerful to comfort saints than these, I am Jesus whom thou lovest. It is I that love thee, and seek thy good; be not afraid of me, nor of the storm. They welcomed Christ into the ship; they willingly received him. Christ's absenting himself for a time, endears him, at his return, to his disciples, who value his presence above any thing. Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. If we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, have received him willingly, though the night be dark, and the wind high, yet we may comfort ourselves with this, we shall be at the shore shortly, and are nearer to it than we suppose.

Many a doubting soul is fetched to heaven by a pleasing surprise, before it is aware.

§ 65. Ver. 22—27. *Christ directs the multitude to spiritual food.*

Many of the people continued near the place, expecting to see Jesus in the morning, as the disciples went by themselves in the only boat there at the time. Before the next morning other boats arrived, and not finding Jesus, they immediately crossed the lake to Capernaum, and when they found him there in the synagogue, ver. 59, they expressed surprise.

Instead of answering their inquiry how he came there, he blamed their motives in seeking him for worldly advantages. He warned them not to labour for the meat that perisheth, meaning all worldly interests, which are of a perishing nature, and from which we are soon removed. Attention and industry are our duty, but should be used to forward our eternal interests, and not for carnal purposes. The utmost earnestness should be employed in seeking salvation in the use of appointed means, at the same time every idea of merit must be excluded; it is to be sought as the gift of the Son of man, the incarnate Redeemer. Him the Father has sealed, proved and evidenced to be God. He has declared the Son of man to be the Son of God with power. Having given him authority, he has given us assurance of it; having intrusted him with unlimited powers, he has satisfied us with undoubted proofs of them; God the Father sealed him with the Spirit that rested on him, by the voice from heaven, by the testimony he bore to him in signs and wonders.

Infinite Justice found Jesus Christ to be without spot or blemish, and therefore sealed, pointed out, and accepted Him as a proper sacrifice and atonement for the sin of the whole world, Heb. 9. 13, 14.—(11.)

He is constituted the only dispenser of these spiritual provisions, as is attested by the testimonies borne to him. These advantages he exhorted the Jews to seek from their Messiah, and not worldly objects. Alas! that so many who profess and call themselves christians, should labour so earnestly, if not wholly, for perishing vanities, neglecting the one thing needful.

27. It was the custom among some eastern nations to set a seal upon victims selected for sacrifice, when they had been found without spot or blemish.

§ 65. Ver. 28, 29. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

The people inquired what they were to do, that they might work the works God required of them. They seem to have expected something in addition to the law of Moses, like the works commanded by the pharisees. Our Lord answered, that they were required to believe on him whom the Father had sent among them. This may be called the first and great commandment of the gospel to a fallen sinner. This faith is contrary to the pride, self-confidence, self-will, and carnal enmity against God, which occupy men's hearts. It requires special grace, but there is much pains to be bestowed in self-examination, opposing the pride and lusts of our hearts, and in using the means of grace, so that it may well be called a work. Let us then remember that constant exercise of faith in Christ, is the most important and arduous part of the obedience required from us, as sinners seeking salvation. When by his grace we are enabled to live a life of faith in the Son of God, all other holy tempers follow, and acceptable services may be performed; but without them no boasted services will be regarded by our holy and merciful God.

§ 65. Ver. 30—35. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

While the Jews imagined that Jesus was about to lead them forth to victory and dominion, they were ready to be his followers; but when he demanded faith in himself, they perceived this opposed their carnal views, and began to question his being the Messiah. Some of them required a sign to convince them that life was to be obtained by faith in him, rather than by the works of the law, and they compared his feeding a few thousands, with the miracle of the whole people being fed with manna, bread from heaven, forty years in the wilderness.

To this our Lord replied, with his usual strong affirmation, that Moses had not given them that bread, nor did Moses create it, as He had done with respect to the food of their late repast. But God, even his Father, who gave them that typical food for the sustenance of their natural lives, now gave them the *true* Bread from the heaven of heavens, for the salvation of their souls. For the Bread of God, so called, really descended from heaven, to give life to perishing sinners

all over the world. The Jews, supposing he alluded to some unknown benefit he wished to confer on them, desired him evermore to give them such bread. Jesus then plainly declared, that by the Bread of life he meant Himself, and that by believing on him they might receive everlasting life. Coming to Christ, and believing on him, signify the same.

Christ shows that he is the true Bread; Observe, 1. Christ is Bread; is that to the soul, which bread is to the body—nourishes and supports the spiritual life. The doctrines of the gospel concerning Christ, that he is the Mediator between God and man, that he is our Peace, our Righteousness, our Redeemer—by these things do men live. Our bodies could better live without food than our souls without Christ.

2. That he is the Bread of God, ver. 33, divine Bread. Bread which the Father gives, ver. 32, which he has made to be the food of our souls; the Bread of God's family, his children's Bread.

3. That he is the Bread of life, ver. 35, and again, ver. 48, that Bread of life, alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden. Christ is the Bread of life, for he is the Fruit of the tree of life. Bread nourishes only by the help of the faculties of a living body; but Christ is himself living Bread, and nourishes by his own power. Manna, if kept but one night, putrified; but Christ is ever living, everlasting Bread, that never waxes old. The doctrine of Christ crucified, is now as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever it was, and his mediation still of as much value and efficacy as ever. He gives life unto the world, spiritual and eternal life; the life of the soul in union and communion with God here, and in the sight and enjoyment of him hereafter; a life that includes in it all happiness. The manna only preserved and supported life, did not give and perpetuate life, much less restore it; but Christ gives life to those that were dead in sin. The manna was ordained only for the life of the Israelites, but Christ is given for the life of the world; Christ came to put life into the minds of men; principles productive of acceptable performances.

4. That he is the Bread which came down from heaven; this is often repeated here. It denotes the Divinity of Christ's person and his authority, also the divine

original of all that good which flows to us through him. He not only came down, but comes down; he is descending: it denotes constant communication of light, life, and love from God to believers through Christ, as the manna descended daily. Blessed be our God that he hath given us the true Bread from heaven! May he create in us an appetite for it; that we may with understanding and earnestness say, Lord, evermore give us this Bread.

33. This and similar declarations show that the pre-existent and Divine nature which descended from heaven, and, when the object was accomplished, ascended where it was before, united itself to human flesh and blood for the most wise and gracious purposes, among which was, that suffering and death should be endured for the redemption of sinful mankind. *J. P. Smith.*

§ 65. Ver. 36—40. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

Our Lord next plainly told the Jews that they did not believe in him. Though they would forsake him, he should not be without disciples, for all whom the Father had given to him would come to him; the event is certain, "they shall and will come." The discovery of their guilt, danger, and remedy, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, makes them willing and glad to come, and to renounce every hope and interest which interferes with applying to him for salvation. He would in no wise cast off any person whatsoever, who thus came to Him. The original implies the strongest expression, that no previous guilt, nor feebleness of effort in applying to Christ, should induce him to reject any one who had a sincere desire of his blessing. The Father's will perfectly concurs, that not one of those who were given to the Son should be rejected or lost by him, and every one who discerns the suitableness of his salvation, so as to believe in Him, and intrust his soul in his hands, should have everlasting life. These two views of the Divine will—the *secret* will concerning those whom he hath chosen to salvation, and the *revealed* will concerning the actual salvation of every believer, perfectly coincide. No one will come till Divine grace hath subdued, and in part changed his heart; and therefore no one who comes will ever be cast out. When an awakened sinner finds the doctrines of God's decrees too powerful for his newly-opened feeble eyes, he should look off from them to the general invitations and promises of the gospel. When he can look at the former, he will find in



them the source of his willingness, and will be encouraged to hope in Christ for the completion of that work which grace hath begun in his soul. Let every one beware of blaspheming or abusing these truths, which are most certainly contained in scripture.

§ 65. Ver. 41—46. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

The Jews murmured at this declaration of the Lord Jesus; they thought him a mere man, and therefore questioned how he could say he came down from heaven. Jesus bade them not murmur, and directed them to the dangerous state of their souls, for no man could possibly come to him except the Father drew him: the unholy nature of fallen man cannot be taken away, except by the power of Divine grace. The gospel finds none willing to be saved in the humbling, holy manner, revealed therein; but the Lord, by his grace, draws sinners to Christ, and this is the cause of their activity and diligence. He cures the fever of the soul, he creates the appetite, he sets the provisions before the sinner, who is drawn to come, and eat, and live for ever. Our Lord reminded them that this was the doctrine of the prophets; and every one who hath learned of the Father, by hearing and believing his word, concerning the evil of sin, the ruined state of man, his need of mercy and grace, and the nature and glory of salvation, will infallibly come to Christ, believe in him, and count all things but loss in comparison of him. But the Jews were not to expect that the Father would teach them personally, for none had seen the Father but his beloved Son; they must expect to be taught by his inward influence upon their minds, and by his word, and the ministers whom he sent among them.

44. God draweth with his word and the Holy Ghost, but man's duty is to hear and learn; that is to say, to receive the grace offered, consent to the promise, and not to impugn the God that calleth.—*Hooper.*

§ 65. Ver. 47—51. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

After a repeated and most solemn assurance, that faith in Him was the only, and the certain method of obtaining everlasting life, our Lord showed them the superiority of his salvation above the manna, which was but a shadow of so great a blessing. The advantage of the manna was very small, except to those

who saw in it the type of good things to come; but the living bread is so excellent, that the man who feedeth on it shall never die. His soul will be nourished to everlasting life, and the death of the body will soon end in a glorious resurrection. This bread is no other than Christ's human nature, which he assumed, to present to the Father as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world; to purchase all things pertaining to life and godliness for sinners of every nation, that repent and believe in him.

The love of Jesus is free, so communicated that he is not content till he has given himself, and that not for his own happiness but ours. How ought we to adore and thank thee, O Jesus, for thy wondrous love to us sinners! And how ungrateful, and worse than ungrateful, must the heart of that christian be who desires not to live more to Christ than to himself.—(94. q.)

51. The Jewish rabbis expected that the Messiah would 'cause bread, or manna, to descend from heaven, as the manna in the wilderness. See ver. 31, &c.

§ 65. Ver. 52—59. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

The Jews disputed about these declarations; probably many of them censured Jesus, and none of them could conceive how he could give them his flesh to eat. He assured them that except they ate his flesh and drank his blood, they had no life in them, but continued dead in sin, and exposed to condemnation.

This has been wretchedly misconstrued by the church of Rome for the support of the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which gives the lie to our senses, contradicts the nature of a sacrament, and overthrows all convincing evidence. They, like these Jews, understand it of carnal eating Christ's body. The Lord's supper was not yet instituted; it is a spiritual eating and drinking that is here spoken of, not a sacramental. It is also misunderstood by many ignorant people, who from hence infer, that if they take the sacrament, when they die they shall certainly go to heaven; which, as it makes many that are weak, causelessly uneasy if they want it, so it makes many that are wicked, causelessly easy if they have it.

Let us see, therefore, how this discourse of Christ's is to be understood. The flesh and blood of the Son of man denote the Redeemer incarnate and dying; Christ

and him crucified, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption; pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the adoption of sons, access to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life; these are called the flesh and blood of Christ. First. Because they are purchased by the breaking his body, and shedding his blood. Well may the purchased privileges be denominated from the price that was paid for them, for it puts the value upon them. Second. Because they are meat and drink to our souls. The privileges of the gospel are as flesh and blood to us, prepared for the nourishment of our souls. It is meat indeed, and drink indeed; truly so, that is, spiritually; as Christ is called the true vine, or truly meat, in opposition to the shows and shadows with which the world deludes all those that feed upon it. In Christ and his gospel are real supply and solid satisfaction; that is meat indeed, and drink indeed, which satisfies and replenishes, Jer. 31. 25, 26.

Eating this flesh and drinking this blood, means believing in Christ. We partake of Christ and his benefits by faith: and believing in Christ includes these four things, which eating does:—

1. It implies an appetite to Christ. This spiritual eating and drinking begins with hungering and thirsting, Matt. 5. 6, earnest and importunate desires after Christ. 2. An application of Christ to ourselves. Meat looked upon will not nourish us, but meat fed upon, and so made our own, and as it were one with us. We must so accept of Christ as to appropriate him to ourselves. 3. A delight in Christ and his salvation. The doctrine of Christ crucified must be meat and drink to us, most pleasant and delightful. 4. Deriving nourishment from him, and dependence upon him, for the support and comfort of our spiritual life, and the strength, growth, and vigour of the new man. To feed upon Christ is to do all in his name, in union with him, and by virtue drawn from him; it is to live upon him as we do upon our meat. How our bodies are nourished by our food we cannot describe, but that they are so, we know and find; and thus it is with this spiritual nourishment. The soul that is sensible of its state and wants, finds suitable and abundant provision in Christ. Whatever can calm the conscience, cheer

the heart, and promote true holiness, is comprised in one glorious object, a mighty Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh, shedding his precious blood to atone for the sins of his rebellious creatures. The christian feeds daily on Christ in his heart, and proceeds in his work and warfare with patient alacrity. Meditation on the cross of Christ gives life to his repentance, love, and gratitude. In proportion as he lives upon Christ, and applies for the blessings purchased by his precious blood, he copies more closely the example left him by his Redeemer, and earnestly seeks to obey his commandments in all things.

We shall live by him, as our bodies live by our food. We live by him as the members by the head, the branches by the root: because he lives we shall live also. We shall live eternally by him.

The historian concludes with an account, where Christ had this discourse with the Jews, ver. 59. In the synagogue, as he taught; implying that he taught them many other things besides these. That he said these things in the synagogue, shows that Christ's doctrine was publicly preached in mixed assemblies, as able to abide the most severe and impartial test. Also it shows the credibility of this narrative of it.

58. This passage, ver. 51—58, does not refer to the institution of the Lord's supper, but declares in figurative, yet very intelligible terms, the necessity of our believing and relying on the sufferings and death of Christ, as a Divine propitiation. Christianity has nothing to do with the absurdities of transubstantiation, or the figurative phraseology of early christian writers, many of whom used extravagant language, though often they abound with excellences.—See *J. P. Smith*. Our Lord's discourse in this chapter has been much dwelt upon as supporting the doctrine of transubstantiation. This notion originated in the sixth century, and is founded on a *literal* interpretation of passages commonly used by the Jews, to whom the scriptures were addressed, in a *metaphorical* sense.—*Townsend*.

§ 65. Ver. 60—65. *Christ's discourse with the multitude.*

Our Lord here spake on mysterious doctrines, and the experimental truths of religion, which went against the prejudices of the Jews. Many inquired who could hear such doctrine, and receive it as of Divine authority? Jesus, knowing their secret thoughts, inquired, if this now so perplexed them, what would they think if they should see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? The human nature of Christ had not before been in

heaven, but being God and man, that mysterious person might be said to have come down from heaven. This implied that the Messiah's kingdom was not of this world; and they were to understand what he had said of a spiritual living upon him, and his fulness, by faith. As without the soul of man the flesh is of no value, so without the quickening Spirit of God all forms of religion are dead and worthless. The words he spake related to spiritual things, on which the life of their souls depended; by believing on him the Holy Spirit would communicate life and salvation to their souls. Yet even the flesh of Christ, the sacrifice for sin, will avail us nothing, unless the blessed Spirit quicken our souls thereby, and enforce the powerful influences of his death upon us, till we by his grace are planted together in the likeness of it. But he spake to them in a figurative manner, because some of them did not believe, and would make a bad use of his instructions, therefore he declared for their warning, that no one could come to him except it were given him of the Father. He who made this provision for our souls, alone can effectually teach us these mysteries, and draw us unto Christ, that we may live by faith in him. Let us apply to Christ, thankful that it is declared that every one who is willing to come unto him shall be made welcome. Let us be thankful that we have discovered our danger and the remedy; and let us seek for further instruction.

§ 65. Ver. 66—71. *Many of the disciples go back.*

From that time many of Christ's disciples went back, and walked no more with him. When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the word and works of Christ, and are willing to hear insinuations tending to their reproach, we are then entering into temptation; which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back. Many of them went back to the things which they had left for a time to follow him, and took leave of him and his doctrine for ever. It was from the very time when Christ announced that those who by faith feed upon him, shall live by him, which good news, one would think, should have engaged them to cleave the more closely to him. The corrupt and wicked heart of man often makes that an occasion of offence, which is indeed matter of the greatest comfort.

This discourse was to others a savour of life unto life. Observe here,

1. The affectionate question which Christ put to the twelve; Will ye also go away? Christ will detain none with him against their wills. But it is at your peril if you do go away. The nearer we have been to Christ, and the longer we have been with him, the greater will be our sin if we desert him.

2. The believing reply which Peter, in the name of the rest, made to this. They would not entertain the least thought of leaving him; Lord, to whom shall we go? Those who leave Christ would do well to consider whom they will go to, and whether they can expect to find rest and peace any where but in him. "Shall we make court to the world? It will certainly deceive us. Shall we return to sin? It will certainly destroy us." The disciples resolve to adhere to Christ as their Guide, for they can never have a better. "If ever we find the way to happiness, it must be by following thee."

The truly broken-hearted sinner can rest satisfied with nothing short of eternal life. Even when discouraged, tempted, and harassed with doubts and fears, he still knows it is vain to think of returning to the world, of seeking salvation by the works of the law, of resting in forms and notions, or of going after false or loose teachers; still he believes, and desires to be assured that Jesus hath the words of eternal life, as being "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Lord had in the foregoing discourse assured eternal life to his followers; the disciples fastened on that plain saying, and resolved to cleave to him, when others fastened on hard sayings, and therefore forsook him. Though we cannot account for every mystery, every obscurity, in Christ's doctrine, yet we know that it is the word of eternal life, and therefore must live and die by it. If we forsake Christ, we forsake our own mercies.

They believed that this Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers, not a mere man, but the Son of the living God. In times of temptation to apostasy, it is good to have recourse to our first principles, and to keep to them. We are sure. We have known it by experience; that is the best knowledge. We should take occasion from others' wavering to be the more established. When we have faith in the gospel of Christ, so as boldly to

venture our souls upon it, knowing whom we have believed, then, and not till then, we shall be willing to venture every thing else for it. And this faith, in its feeblest exercise, essentially differs from that of the most specious hypocrite.

Here is the melancholy remark which our Lord Jesus made upon this reply of Peter, ver. 70, 71. Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? The evangelist tells us he spake of Judas Iscariot. Peter had undertaken for them all; Christ does not condemn his charity. God knows them that are his, we do not. Observe here, that of the twelve who were chosen to an intimate conversation with the incarnate Deity—as great an honour and privilege as ever men were chosen to—one was an incarnate devil! Let us not therefore say, that all are cheats and hypocrites, because one of them was so; let those that are so bear the blame, and not those who, while they are undiscovered, associate with them. May we be now searched and proved by the Spirit, and made sound in the Divine statutes, as those whom God hath chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and the belief of his holy truth.

And let us ever remember our Lord's searching question. Shall we go away and forsake our Redeemer? To whom can we go? He only can give salvation by the remission of sins. It is this religion which enlightens the understanding with true knowledge, and warms the heart with true charity. It is this alone brings confidence, comfort, and joy, and bids fear and despondency fly away. This raises the soul from the dead, puts new vigour into all her powers and faculties, and animates her to duty, &c. This is a counterbalance to the temptations of sense by the promises made to our faith, which supports the infirmity of our nature by the glorious objects proposed to our hope, and which triumphs over the world by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. It procures the only solid happiness in this world, and opens a way to the felicity of the next.—(32.)

#### CHAPTER VII.

§ 81. Ver. 1—13. *Christ's discourse with his brethren. He goes to the feast of tabernacles.*

The Jews, the people in Judea and Jerusalem, sought to kill Jesus. It is not said, He durst not, but, He would

not walk in Jewry, because his hour was not yet come. Gospel light is justly taken away from those that endeavour to extinguish it.

The feast of tabernacles was one of the three solemnities which called for the personal attendance of all the males at Jerusalem. It was intended to be both a memorial of the tabernacle-state of Israel in the wilderness, and a figure of the tabernacle-state of God's spiritual Israel in this world. Divine institutions never go out of date by length of time; nor must wilderness mercies be forgotten.

The brethren or kinsmen of Jesus seem to have been disgusted, when they found there was no prospect of worldly advantages from him. They intimated that he would have many disciples in Judea. They take it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles: If thou do these things, if thou art so well able to gain the applause of the people, and the approbation of the rulers, by thy miracles, show thyself to the world.

They either desired to lead Jesus into danger, thinking the scribes and pharisees might examine his claims, and detect some imposture; or they were actuated by worldly motives. No outward evidences or advantages can overcome the enmity of the human heart, and we need not be discouraged by the contempt or opposition of our relations, when we remember that the brethren of Jesus did not believe in him. Ungodly men sometimes undertake to counsel those who are employed in the work of God; but they only advise what may appear to promote present advantages.

He told them his time for going up to the feast was not come; it was not yet proper to avow himself in the midst of his enemies. They might go up to Jerusalem at any time in safety. The world had no enmity or quarrel with their principles or conduct; but all sorts of unconverted sinners must hate Him who testified that their works were evil. And the same effects will always be produced by the same cause. Our Lord, therefore, bade them go up to the feast. He chose to go privately. The spiritually-minded man has reasons for his proceedings, of which the world cannot judge.

As the Jews sought our Lord, it may be supposed that he generally attended

the feasts. The people differed respecting his doctrine and miracles, while those who favoured him dared not openly to avow their sentiments. In general, those who count the preachers of the gospel to be deceivers, will speak out, while many who favour them will fear to incur reproach by avowing regard for them.

§ 81. Ver. 14—18. *Christ's discourse at the feast of tabernacles.*

About the middle of the feast, Jesus went up to the temple, and taught the people; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem inquired, with surprise and disdain, how he could have acquired learning, or be qualified to teach. Our Lord answered that his doctrine was not his own, after the manner of human study; but it was the message of God the Father who sent him; so that it was wisdom from heaven. And as the doctrine was divine, the preparation for understanding it was sincere willingness, and earnest desire to do the will of God. The man who was brought to this temper, and determined to obey the Divine commands, however they might interfere with his worldly interests, should be enabled to know whether the doctrine was of God, or whether he spake of himself, as one that deceived the people. Such a frame of mind removes the prejudices which cloud the understanding; it is the effect of Divine grace; and He who hath so wrought upon the mind, will enable it to discern the truth, and to reject error. Indeed it is essential for a man to be afraid of being deceived, to distrust himself, and seek diligently for Divine teaching. To this our Lord added, that the teacher who is not sent of God will, one way or another, seek his own honour or advancement; while he who disregards himself, that he may seek the honour of God, proves himself to be truly sent of Him. Applying this to Christ, who endured poverty, contempt, and suffering, for the glory of God in man's salvation, it was evident he was true, and there was no unrighteousness in him.

Every faithful minister may humbly adopt the words of Christ. His doctrine is not his own invention, but is deduced from God's word, through the teaching of his Spirit. And amidst the various controversies which agitate the world, what a blessed encouragement it is to remember that if any man, of any nation, seek to do

the will of God, he shall know whether the doctrine is of God, or whether men speak of themselves! so that they only shall be given up to destructive delusions who hate the truth.

15. The learning then most prized by the Jews.  
§ 81. Ver. 19—24. *Christ discourses concerning the sabbath.*

It was a considerable time since Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda; yet the Jewish rulers still sought to put him to death, on the pretence that he had then broken the sabbath. To this he referred, observing that they were zealously attached to Moses, yet they did not obey his law, else why did they seek his life, contrary to the sixth commandment? Some exclaimed that he was mad, and possessed with a devil, to suppose such was the case. He answered that he had wrought a miracle which astonished them, not so much for the power and goodness therein displayed, as because it was done on the sabbath day, when he ordered the man to carry his bed, as an evidence of his cure. He reminded them of the law of circumcision. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was given by Moses. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise 430 years before, Gal. 3. 17.

They could not observe the law respecting circumcision without deviating from that exact rest which they supposed the sabbath required; nor did they deem it a breach of that holy day. Surely it was as consistent with the design of the sabbath to restore health to the afflicted, as to administer an outward rite. Jesus therefore required them not to judge by partial prejudices, but to decide on his conduct according to the spiritual import of the Divine law. Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but righteous judgment. We must not judge concerning any by their outward appearance, but by their worth, and the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

Men may pretend to be very zealous for religion, while at the same time they are acting in direct opposition to the plain precepts of God's word, and will revile those who check them. It behooves us to consider matters more fairly, and to guard against the folly of opposing our opinions against instructions from God.

24. *Calmet* observes, that the multitude about Christ at this time, consisted of, 1. The rulers, &c. the enemies of Christ. 2. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who knew the opinions of the ruler concerning him. 3. The strangers who had come to the feast, and were ignorant of those designs. These listened attentively to Jesus. The latter expressed their astonishment, as in ver. 20. The Jews of Jerusalem spoke as in ver. 28.

§ 81. Ver. 25—30. *Christ at the feast of tabernacles.*

Some inhabitants of Jerusalem, who knew the designs of the council, asked whether this was the person whom the rulers intended to put to death as a deceiver. They were astonished that he met with no interruption, and inquired whether the rulers were at length persuaded that this was the promised Messiah. They knew Jesus was an inhabitant of Nazareth; but thought no man would know whence the Messiah came. It appears they had some confused notion of the Divine original of the great Redeemer, but were ignorant of the circumstances concerning our Lord's birth.

They endeavour to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they countenanced them, when there was no such thing. People err concerning Christ, because they know not scripture.

Christ proclaimed aloud, in reproof of their opposition, that they were in error in their imaginations concerning his original. He was not come of himself, but was sent of God, who showed himself true to his promises. Though they pretended to be worshippers of God, they had no experimental knowledge of Him; but he perfectly knew Him, being come to make Himself known unto men. This declaration, that they knew not God, with his claim to peculiar knowledge, exasperated the hearers; they sought some opportunity to take him, but none ventured to do so, because his hour was not yet come. God can tie men's hands, though he does not turn their hearts.

If we would understand religion, we must seek this knowledge of God from the incarnate Son, by contemplating his character, miracles, and sufferings; otherwise there is much ignorance of God, even with many who have a form of knowledge; and the true reason why people reject Christ, is, because they do not know God. For there is such harmony of the Divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that

the *right* knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce the latter.

§ 81. Ver. 31—36. *Christ at the feast of tabernacles.*

The discourses of Jesus convinced many that he was the Messiah; and they inquired whether that deliverer could work greater miracles? They believe in him, but have not courage to own it. Even weak faith may be true faith, and so accounted, so accepted, by the Lord Jesus, who despises not the day of small things. The report of these things being carried to the pharisees, probably then sitting in council, they sent officers to bring him before them. Jesus, upon this, observed to them, that he should continue with them a little longer, notwithstanding their designs against him; but that after a little time, he should return to the Father who sent Him. Then they might seek, but they would not find, nor be able to enter the happy place whither he was going. This may refer to the calamities then coming on the Jewish nation, for their enmity to Christ, and to their vainly waiting for a Messiah to save them from temporal ruin.

However, it is matter of comfort to those who are *in* the world, but not *of* it, and therefore are hated by it and sick of it, that they shall not be in it always, they shall not be in it long. We must be a while with those that are pricking briers and grieving thorns; but thanks be to God, it is but a little while, and we shall be out of their reach. Our days being evil, it is well they are few. Let those who suffer for Christ, comfort themselves with this, that they have a God to go to, and are going to him, to be for ever with him.

But they had no idea of his ascension to heaven, and inquired whether he meant to go among those Jews who were dispersed in other nations, and to teach the Gentiles, whom they despised. So common is it for those who have lost the power of religion, to be jealous for the name.

The day of life and of grace are both of short continuance; and sinners, when in misery, would be glad of the help they now despise. They may dispute concerning such sayings at present, but the event will explain them.

35. "Will he go to the region where the dispersed Jews inhabit, and teach the Greeks?"—*Bloomfield.*

§ 81. Ver. 37—39. *Christ at the feast of tabernacles.*

On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, there was a holy convocation, Lev. 23. 36, and they then drew water and poured it out before the Lord. It is supposed that our Lord stood forth, and, alluding to this ceremony, proclaimed aloud, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Thus he declared himself the unfailing source of salvation to perishing sinners—yea, the Fountain of living waters, in opposition to the broken cisterns of mere creatures. If any one felt destitute, miserable, and desirous of true happiness, let him apply to Him, and his wants would be supplied. If any sinner were disquieted with guilt and fear of wrath, desiring God's favour and recovery to holiness, let him come to Jesus, his terrors would be removed, and the blessings thirsted after would be granted. How sad is the case of man, that he must be importuned to be happy; and how wonderful the grace of Christ, that he will importune him!

The invitation itself, which is, 1. Very general—If any man thirst, whoever he be, he is invited to Christ. Be he high or low, rich or poor, young or old, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. 2. Very gracious—If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. If any man desires to be truly and eternally happy, let him apply to me, and be ruled by me.

As this thirst especially means strong desires after spiritual blessings, which nothing else can satisfy, so the sanctifying and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit were particularly intended by the waters which Christ called on them to come to Him and drink.

Provision is made, not only for present satisfaction, but for continual, perpetual comfort. Here is living water, running water, which the Hebrew language calls living, because in motion. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to living (meaning running) water, because they are the active, quickening principles of spiritual life, and the earnest and beginnings of eternal life, Jer. 2. 13. The comfort flows in both plentifully and constantly as a river; strong as a stream to bear down the opposition of doubts and fears. There is a fulness in Christ, of grace for grace. These flow out of the believer's heart and soul, which are the subject of the Spirit's working, and the

seat of his government. There gracious principles are planted; and out of the heart, in which the Spirit dwells, flow the issues of life, Prov. 4. 23. Observe further, where there are springs of grace and comfort in the soul, they will send forth streams. Grace and comfort will evidence themselves. Good affections will produce good actions, and a holy heart will be seen in a holy life; the tree is known by its fruits, and the fountain by its streams. They will communicate themselves for the benefit of others. It is not enough that we ourselves take the comfort of the grace given us, but we must let our fountains be dispersed abroad.

As the scripture hath said, seems to refer to some promises in the Old Testament; there are many to this purport, as Prov. 1. 23; Joel 2. 28; Isa. 44. 3; Zech. 12. 10; Isa. 41. 18; 43. 19; 58. 11; Cant. 4. 15; Ezek. 47. 1; Zech. 14. 8.

Here is the evangelist's exposition of this promise; This spake he of the Spirit; not of any outward advantages accruing to believers, but of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit. Scripture is the best interpreter of scripture.

Observe, it is promised to all who believe on Christ, that they shall receive the Holy Ghost: all receive his sanctifying graces. The gift of the Holy Ghost is one of the great blessings promised in the new covenant, Acts 2. 38; and the promise will be performed to all that have an interest in that covenant. The Spirit dwelling and working in believers, is as a fountain of living, running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water, mollifying and moistening as water, making them fruitful and joyful.

If we compare the clear knowledge and strong grace of the disciples of Christ themselves, after the day of Pentecost, with their darkness and weakness before, we shall understand in what sense the Holy Ghost was not yet given. That which is most properly called the dispensation of the Spirit, had not yet commenced. The reason why the Holy Ghost was not yet given, was, because Jesus was not yet glorified. The death of Christ is sometimes called his glorification; for on his cross he conquered and triumphed. Now the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased by the blood of Christ, and the giving of the Holy Ghost was to be both an answer to Christ's

intercession, ch. 14. 16, and an act of his dominion; and therefore, till he is glorified, the Holy Ghost, that is the gifts of the Spirit, are not given. The conversion of the Gentiles also was the glorifying of Jesus.

Still the Divine Redeemer proclaims aloud to every man that is athirst, to come to him. Happy is he whom nothing can satisfy but the favour of God. Let him come to Jesus, and not fear a repulse. From him, our smitten Rock, the waters of life flow forth abundantly to satisfy the true Israelites through this barren wilderness. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit we do not expect, but for His more common and more valuable influences we may apply. These influences of the Spirit will not only be, in believers, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, but they will flow forth in their words and works, for the refreshment and good of others. These streams have flowed from our glorified Redeemer, through the apostles, evangelists, and successive believers, down to us in this distant age, and at the remote corners of the earth. May we be anxious to communicate them around us!

37. On this day water was brought from Siloa with much ceremony, in golden vessels, mixed with wine, and poured out on the altar. It was a ceremony to commemorate the water miraculously and plentifully supplied to their fathers in the desert.

38. Some do think that waters flow out of the belly of the believers, when he that is endowed with the Spirit imparts some portion unto his brethren, as there ought to be mutual participation among us. But the sense seems to be more simple, that whosoever shall believe in Christ, he shall have a well of life, as it were, springing in him, as ch. 4. 14.—*Calvin*. The word here rendered belly is properly the heart.

§ 81. Ver. 40—53. *The people dispute concerning Christ. The officers' testimony to Christ.*

Our Lord's open declaration, and his other instructions, excited further debate among the people. Some deemed him the prophet that was to precede the Messiah, others the Messiah himself. But some objected that Jesus was of Galilee. Thus they remained under the power of their prejudices, because they did not make inquiry concerning Jesus. Amidst these disputes, even such of the officers as were disposed to take Jesus, could not summon resolution to do it, but returned to the council without him. Being questioned for their neglect, they replied that never man spake as this person did.

They would have taken him; but no

man laid hands on him, being restrained by an invisible power, because his hour was not come. The malice of Christ's enemies is always unreasonable, sometimes the suspension of it is unaccountable.

This was a truth, that never any man spake with that wisdom, and power, and grace, that convincing clearness, and that sweetness, wherewith Christ spake; none of the prophets, no, not Moses himself. Thus Christ was preserved by the power God has over the consciences, even of bad men. Alas that many, who are for a time impressed and restrained, and who speak highly of the word of Jesus, so speedily lose their convictions and go on in their sins!

The enraged pharisees demanded whether they also were deceived into an opinion of Jesus being the Messiah; and endeavoured to make their own conduct the test of truth, representing those who followed him as a contemptible rabble, who knew not the meaning of the scriptures.

The cause of Christ has seldom had rulers and pharisees on its side. It needs not secular supports, nor proposes secular advantages, therefore it neither courts nor is courted by the great men of this world. Self-denial and the cross are hard lessons to rulers and pharisees. This has confirmed many in their prejudices against Christ and his gospel. Shall laymen pretend to be more concerned about spiritual things than spiritual men themselves, or to see further into religion than those who make its study their profession? Others think that if rulers and pharisees do not believe in Christ, those who do believe in him will be accounted the most singular, unfashionable, ungenteel people in the world, and quite out of the way of preferment. Thus people are foolishly swayed by outward motives in matters of eternal moment, are willing to be damned for fashion's sake, and to go to hell in compliment to the rulers and pharisees.

But though the followers of Christ were generally persons of mean appearance and fortune, yet by owning Christ they discovered wisdom, integrity, and interest in the favour of Heaven, which made them truly great and considerable. As the wisdom of God often chooses base things, and the things which are despised, so the folly of men commonly despises those whom God has chosen. Many a plain, honest, unlearned disciple of Christ, by meditation, experience, prayer, and



obedience, attains to more sound and useful knowledge of the word of God, than some great scholars with all their learning. If the common people did not know the law, yet the chief priest and pharisees, of all men, should not have upbraided them with it; for whose fault was it but theirs, who should have taught them better, but, instead of that, took away the key of knowledge? Luke 11. 52.

Nicodemus had the courage to reply, inquiring whether their law judged any man unheard concerning the things of which he was accused. Here was an answer to their demand! Here was a ruler, a teacher and a pharisee, who favoured Jesus. They began to revile him, as speaking like an ignorant, worthless Galilean, and told him no prophet would arise out of Galilee. The interference of Nicodemus, however, seems to have hindered them from proceeding further against Jesus at that time. Thus the Lord brings forward his weak and timid disciples, and sometimes uses them to defeat the designs of his enemies. But let none justify disguising their faith by the example of Nicodemus; unless, like him, they are ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone, for so Nicodemus did here, and see ch. 19. 39.

Let us beware not to take it for granted that we are believers in Christ. The Jews thought they were believing Moses and showing their knowledge of the law, while acting in direct opposition to his words. As they deceived themselves, so do all now who imagine they can be saved in any way but that of a total surrender to Christ. We must be Christ's now, if we will be his hereafter.—(61.)

49. The pharisees here showed their contempt for the common people. In the law they included their own traditions. They said that none could partake of the resurrection except themselves and their disciples, unless for services rendered to them.

52. It is probable that the pharisees here only advert to what had been the case at a later period, or since the country had been called Galilee; for several prophets mentioned in the Old Testament were from among the northern tribes which were comprehended in that district.

## CHAPTER VIII.

§ 92. Ver. 1-11. *The pharisees and the adulteress.*

Three things are noticed here concerning Christ's preaching. 1. The time; early in the morning. Though he had passed

the night in the mount of Olives, and doubtless had spent much of it in secret prayer, yet he came early. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls, it is good to begin betimes. 2. The place; in the temple, a place of concourse. He hereby countenances solemn assemblies for religious worship. 3. He sat down and taught, as one having authority, and that intended to continue for sometime.

The people would come to hear him; and Christ welcomed, and taught them.

The scribes and pharisees brought to him a woman taken in adultery. Such were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed. Observe, she was taken in her crime. Those who promise themselves secrecy in sin, deceive themselves. The scribes and pharisees seemed to have great zeal against the sin, when they themselves were full of all uncleanness, Matt. 23. 27, 28. It is common for those that are indulgent to their own sins, to be severe against others. The proof of the crime was incontestable. Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned. They prayed his judgment in the case. If they had asked with humble desire to know his mind, it had been commendable, and those intrusted with the administration of justice, should look up to Christ for direction; but they said this, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. If he confirmed the sentence of the law, they would censure him as inconsistent with himself, he having received publicans and harlots, and with the character of the Messiah, who should be merciful, impart salvation, and proclaim a year of release. If he gave his opinion that the sentence should not be executed, they would represent him as an enemy to the law of Moses, and as a favourer of sin. He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote. But while Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

Christ neither reflected upon the law, nor excused the prisoner's guilt; nor did he countenance their pretended zeal. He referred to a rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the hand of the witnesses must be first upon them, Deut. 17. 7. The scribes and pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Christ says to them. He

that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. Christ puts it to them, whether they would be the executioners. Would not their own consciences accuse them if they did?

They are self-condemned who judge others, and yet do the same thing. We ought to be favourable, though not to the sins, yet to the persons of those that offend, and seek to restore them with a spirit of meekness. Those that are any way called to censure the faults of others, are especially concerned to look well to themselves, and keep themselves pure. The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold.

In this Christ attended to the great work about which he came into the world, that was, to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the accused to repentance, by showing her his mercy, but the prosecutors also, by showing them their sins; they thought to insnare him, he sought to convince and convert them.

Having given them this startling word, he again stooped and wrote on the ground. The scribes and pharisees were struck—they went out one by one. He had showed them to themselves; if they stayed till he lifted up himself again, his next word might show them to the world, and shame them before men. They went out one by one, they departed by stealth. See here, 1. The force of the word of Christ for the conviction of sinners. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, one word from him will set it to work, Heb. 4. 12. 2. The folly of sinners under convictions, to make it their principal care to avoid shame. Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our credit. It is folly to contrive how to shift off convictions, and to get rid of them. It is folly for those under convictions to go from Jesus Christ, as these did, for he alone can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those convicted by their consciences, will be condemned by their Judge, if not justified by their Redeemer; and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?

When the prosecutors fled, the self-condemned prisoner did not seek to escape. Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus, never have occasion to remove it, for he is the refuge of penitents. The law, which calls for judgment against us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw; its demands are silenced by

the blood of Jesus. We are left with Jesus alone, with him only we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us secure our interest in him. Let his gospel rule us, and it will infallibly save us.

Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman. Though Christ may seem to leave the contending sons of men to themselves, yet, when the hour of his judgment is come, he will no longer keep silence. The woman, it is likely, stood trembling, as doubtful of the issue. Christ was without sin, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to repenting sinners, for he is infinitely gracious and merciful.

Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? ver. 10. Christ asked, that he might shame those who declined his judgment, and encourage her who abided by it. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him Lord; but does not triumph over her accusers, as witnesses against themselves. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judge, we must forgive our accusers; if their accusations were the occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily forgive them, even if they did us wrong. But she answered the question which concerned herself, Has no man condemned thee? True penitents find it enough to give account of themselves to God, and will not undertake to give account of other people.

Christ said, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more. Consider this, 1. As her discharge from temporal punishment. He declined all interference with the magistrate's office. Adultery, and many other crimes, merit severer punishment than they usually meet with; but we should not leave our peculiar work to assume a province to which we are not called. Also the justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes notices a comparative righteousness, and spares those who are obnoxious, when punishing them would gratify those that are worse than they Deut. 32. 26. But when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, Go and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal, should help to save the soul with this caution; otherwise escape from temporal punishment only gives opportunity to treasure up wrath against the day of

wrath. 2. As her discharge from the eternal punishment. For Christ to say, I do not condemn thee, is, in effect, to say, I do forgive thee; and the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. As he thoroughly knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors, and therefore said that which would confound them, so he knew the tenderness and the sincere repentance of the accused, and said that which would comfort her.

Note. 1. They are truly happy, whom Christ doth not condemn. 2. Christ will not condemn those, who, though they have sinned, will go and sin no more. 3. Christ's favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past, should be a prevailing argument with us to go and sin no more, Rom. 6. 1, 2. Does Christ not condemn thee? Go then, sin no more.

8. Some Greek copies here read, "He wrote on the ground the sins of every one of them:" this he could do, for he sets our iniquities before him; and this he will do, for he will set them in order before us too. But he does not write men's sins in the sand; no, they are written as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, Jer. 17. 1, never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.—*Henry.*

11. The genuineness of the passage, ver. 1—11, has been doubted, but without sufficient reason. The weight of evidence is considered to be decidedly and satisfactorily in its favour. The omission in some manuscripts seems to have originated from a most unfounded apprehension, lest our Lord's refusing to condemn the woman should be considered as affording encouragement to sin. It is plain that our Lord here only refused to interfere with the magisterial office. He condemned her sin, and bade her do so no more.

§ 83. Ver. 12—16. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

In these verses we have a great doctrine laid down, with the application of it.

1. The doctrine is, That Christ is the Light of the world, ver. 12. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God. He was expected to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, Luke 2. 32, and so the Light of the world, not of the Jewish church only. The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the Sun of righteousness. One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ, and there needs no more. Christ's being the Light, speaks, What he is in himself—most excellent and glorious. What he is to the world—the Fountain of Light, enlightening every man. What a dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Christ, by whom light came into the world.

2. The inference from this doctrine is, He that followeth me, as a traveller follows the light in a dark night, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. If Christ be the Light, then it is our duty to follow him; in every thing to take directions from him. Many follow false lights, that lead to destruction; but Christ is the true Light. It is not enough to look at this Light, but we must follow it, and walk in it; it is a Light to our feet, not to our eyes only.

Those who follow Christ, shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left destitute of the instructions in the way of truth, which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and the directions in the way of duty, which are necessary to keep them from condemning sin. Let us follow Christ, and we shall undoubtedly follow him to heaven.

The objection the pharisees made against this doctrine was very frivolous; they overlooked the testimony of all the other witnesses, who corroborated the testimony Christ bore of himself. In reply, he plainly vindicates himself; he abides by his own testimony. He is the Light of the world, and light is self-evidencing. He urges three things, to prove that his testimony was true.

1. He did not speak at uncertainty, nor propose a disputable notion, but declared a decree. He was fully apprized of his own undertaking from first to last.

2. They were incompetent judges of him and of his doctrine. To what purpose is it to talk with those who know nothing of the matter, nor desire to know? They were partial. When we judge in favour of that which pleases the carnal mind, and recommends us to a carnal world, we judge after the flesh; and the judgment cannot be right, when the rule is wrong. He came among them at that time as a Saviour, and did not mean then to execute vengeance on any, of which he had just given them a proof.

3. This testimony of himself was corroborated by the testimony of his Father with him, and for him. His union of counsel, nature, and operation, with the Father who sent him, and was with him, excluded all possibility of error.

14. The word rendered "come," always implies an actual change of place.

15. Or, As yet I judge no man,—Christ then appearing rather as a teacher than a judge.—*Lampe.*

§ 83. Ver. 17—20. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

The law admitted the evidence of two persons as sufficient to prove any fact. Jesus therefore observed that he was a competent witness concerning his own nature and mission; and that his Father was another witness to him, who could not be excepted against. He doubtless referred to his miracles, the voice from heaven, and the ancient prophecies, which proved that he was the Son of God. But the Jews, unwilling to meet his argument, inquired where his Father was.

1. In reply he charges them with ignorance of God. They had some knowledge of him as the Creator, but they could not see the light of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. 2. He shows them the true cause of their ignorance of God. Men are ignorant of God because they are unacquainted with Jesus Christ. Chrysostom proves hence the Godhead of Christ, and his equality with his Father. We cannot say, he that knows a creature, knows the Creator; but we may say, he that knows Christ, knows the Father. By him we shall be instructed in the knowledge of God. If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better; but where the christian religion is slighted and opposed, natural religion will soon be lost and laid aside. Deism makes way for atheism. Those become vain in their imaginations concerning God, who will not learn of Christ. Those who know not his glory and grace, know not the Father that sent him; but by the knowledge of the Son in all his characters and work as a Mediator, the sanctifying knowledge of the Father is attained also.

These words spake Jesus, these bold words, these words of conviction and reproof, in the treasury, a part of the temple. Yet even in the temple, where they had him in their reach, no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come. God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea; let us not fear danger in the way of duty. His hour was not yet come. The time of our departure out of the world depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. It will surely come; it is coming; it is at hand. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor can our friends delay it any longer than the time appointed of the Father. Every good man can look up and say with pleasure,

Ver. 17—20.

My times are in thy hand, and better there than in my own. Christ's hour was not yet come, because his work was not done, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes there is a time.

§ 83. Ver. 21—29. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

Our Lord warned the unbelieving Jews more plainly of their guilt and danger. Every word is terrible, and speaks spiritual judgments, the sorest of all; worse than war, pestilence, and captivity. In their approaching miseries they would in vain desire another Messiah, to deliver them according to their views, but in this vain expectation they would perish in their sins; they would be unable to come whither Christ was going.

Those that live in unbelief, are for ever undone, if they die in unbelief. Many who have long lived in sin, by timely repentance, through grace, are saved from dying in sin; but for those who go out of this world under the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power of sin unbroken, there remains no relief. The impenitent not only shall not come to Christ, but they cannot; it is impossible, for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified, and unmeet for it.

The Jews, thinking only of this world, perversely and scornfully inquired whether he meant to murder himself, to get out of their reach. In reply to this malignant reflection, Jesus told them they were earthly in their origin and diabolical in their disposition; they belonged to this present evil world, but he was from above, he was of a heavenly and Divine nature, so that his doctrine, kingdom, and blessings, would not suit their taste. While this contrary nature and disposition continued, there could be no cordial intercourse between them. Nor could they escape condemnation for their sins unless they believed him to be the promised Messiah.

If Christ do not cure us, our case is desperate, and we shall die in our sins. Without faith we cannot be saved from the punishment of sin when we die, for the wrath of God remains upon them that believe not, Mark 16. 16. Unbelief is the damning sin, it is a sin against the remedy. But the curse of the law is annulled to all that submit to the grace of the gospel; believers die in Christ, in his love, in his arms, and so are saved from dying in their sins.

True faith does not amuse the soul with an empty sound of words, but affects it with the doctrine of Christ's mediation, as a real thing that has real effects. How necessary it is that we believe this; for without this faith we cannot be saved from the power of sin while we live, and therefore shall certainly continue in it to the very last. Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine given, to be effectual to those only who believe in Christ.

The Jews then inquired who he was, that they should be required to believe in him. The most obvious meaning of his answer is, as if he had said, At the beginning of this discourse, I told you that I was the Light of the world; and if you believe on me as such, you will gradually know more of my person and doctrine. This was equal to telling them he was the Son of God, or the Messiah. He added, he had more to say concerning his salvation, as well as their guilt and danger; but this was not his present work. His Father, being true and faithful, would certainly fulfil all his ancient promises and threatenings. He spake to the world those things, all those, and those only, which he had heard of him. He was a faithful witness, *Rev.* 3. 14. He did not conceal his doctrine, but spake it to the world, being of general concern, it was to be of general notice, nor did he change or alter it, nor vary from the instructions he received from Him that sent him. They were so blinded by their prejudices that they did not understand that he meant the God whom they worshipped as the Father of heaven and earth.

See here, 1. The power of Satan to blind the minds of them who believe not. 2. The reason why the threatenings of the word make so little impression upon sinners, because they understand not whose wrath is revealed in them.

Christ then said, referring to his crucifixion, that when they had lifted up Him, the Son of Man, they would know he was their promised Messiah; that he had done and taught nothing separate from his Father, who continued to be in him, and to work with him, as was proved by his miracles; for all he said and did perfectly pleased the Father, as fulfilling

his eternal purposes, and displaying his glory

Some say, Who is this Jesus? They allow him to have been a prophet, an excellent moral teacher, and a bright example of mercy and patience; nay, to have been the chief of men, and even something more than a creature; but cannot acknowledge him as God over all, blessed for evermore. Will not this suffice?—Jesus himself here answers the question. Is this to honour him as the Father? Does this answer to his being the Light of the world, and the Life of men, one with the Father? Will he, who said such things of himself, when in this vale of humiliation, contradict them now he is on his throne of glory? All shall know by their conversion, or in their condemnation, that he always spake and did what pleased the Father, even when he claimed highest honours to himself.

21, 24. In ver. 21, in the original it is "sin;" in ver. 24, "sins." *Cabrin* considers that this, being in the singular in the former place, notes that unbelief is the cause and fountain of all evils, because it estranges us from Christ, and deprives us of his grace, from whence we should have had deliverance from all our sins.

§23. Ver. 30—36. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

Such power attended our Lord's words, that many were convinced, and professed to believe in him. Directing his discourse to them, he encouraged them to continue in his word, to attend his instructions, rely on his promises, and obey his commands, notwithstanding all temptations to evil. Thus doing, they would be his disciples truly; and by the teaching of his word and Spirit, they would learn where their hope and strength lay.

It is a great privilege to know the truth; to know the particular truths we are to believe, and the grounds and reasons of our belief; to know what is truth. Thus his disciples would be freed from the bondage of sin and Satan; from the love of the world, the fear of men, from the dread of death, and the condemnation due to their sins. Thus they would possess the greatest liberty in the willing service of God, and the enjoyment of his favour.

It is a gracious promise of Christ to all who continue in his word, that they shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for them.

Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin; sanctification makes us free

from the bondage of corruption; gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. The knowing, entertaining, and believing this truth actually makes us free from prejudice, mistakes, and false notions; also from the dominion of lust and passion. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in its light and power, is vastly enlarged, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense; it never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under the Divine command, 2 Cor. 3. 17. Those really are the freest reasonings, that are guided by faith, and those are men of free thought, whose thoughts are brought into obedience to Christ.

Far from understanding this, our Lord's hearers declared, they were Abraham's seed, and never in bondage to any man, though, as a nation, they had often been in captivity, and were then under the Roman dominion! Christ had spoken of spiritual liberty; but carnal hearts are sensible of no other grievances than those that molest the body, and distress their worldly affairs. Talk to them of their civil liberty and property, tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses, and they understand you very well; the thing touches them, and affects them; but discourse of the bondage of sin, a captivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ; tell of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare, and you bring strange things to their ears.

Jesus plainly reminded them, that the man who practised any habitual sin, was, in fact, a slave to that sin, which was the case with most of them. But even if, instead of being so entirely the slaves of sin, they had served God more exactly according to the letter of the law, yet, rejecting his salvation, they could not abide in the family for ever as children and heirs. They have no inheritance, their residence is but for a time, not for a constancy. They must at length be excluded, like Ishmael, who was the son of Abraham by a bond-woman. But the Son of God, who was eminently the Seed of Abraham, abideth for ever in the family as heir. If then He, as the Son and Heir, made them free by his power and grace, according to the will of his Father, they would be free indeed, receiving the Spirit of adoption, the privileges and in-

heritance of children. Their case is not helpless, not hopeless. Christ in the gospel offers us our freedom, he has power to do this, and those whom Christ makes free are free indeed, really so, it denotes the excellency of their freedom.

As men impose upon themselves, with regard to worldly concerns, by self-flattery, it is the less wonder if they mistake their character and state, in relation to God and the eternal world. Often do we see persons declaiming and disputing about liberty of every kind, while they are slaves to some sinful lust or passion.

§ 83. Ver. 37—40. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

Our Lord opposed the presumptuous confidence of these Jews in Abraham, showing that relation could not profit those of a contrary spirit to him.

The reason of this; Because my word has no place in you. The words of Christ ought to have a place in us, the innermost and uppermost place; as at home not as a stranger; a working place, it must have room to operate, to work sin out of us, and to work grace in us; it must have a ruling place, its place must be upon the throne. Many make profession of religion, in whom the word of Christ has no place; they will not allow it a place, for they do not like it. Satan does all he can to displace it; and other things possess the place it should have in us. Where the word of God has no place, no good is to be expected, room is left there for all wickedness.

His doctrine and their practice must be opposed to each other; for he spake the truths he had seen with his Father; they did the wicked works they had learned from their father. The Jews again insisting that Abraham was their father, Jesus showed that they did not at all accord with Abraham's example, who always welcomed every discovery of the truth and will of God, with faith and obedience, while they were seeking to murder him who had told them the truth.

A sick person who rejects his physician, and will take neither remedies nor food, is past all hope of recovery. The truth contains both; it heals and nourishes the heart of those who receive it; but it is not the truth taught by philosophers which has this power and efficacy, but the truth of God.—(94. q.)

Those who would approve themselves Abraham's seed, must not only be of

Abraham's faith, but do Abraham's works, James 2, 21, 22, must follow God wherever he leads them, must resign their dearest earthly comforts to him, must be strangers and sojourners in this world, must keep up the worship of God in their families, and always walk before God, for these were the works of Abraham.

§ 83. Ver. 41—47. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

The unbelieving Jews, perceiving our Lord's meaning, interrupted him with indignation, declaring they were not descendants of idolaters or apostates, but the covenanted people and children of Jehovah. Jesus replied, that if they were such, they would certainly have loved him, the beloved Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, for he proceeded forth and came from God. The words imply more than his coming into the world as Mediator. Had the Jews desired the favour of God, or sought his glory, they would have welcomed Jesus as their Saviour; but their pride, prejudices, and passions, closed their minds against his doctrines, therefore they were determined not to believe that he was the Messiah. In short, they were children of the devil, and followed his malignant purposes. From the first existence of man, the great adversary had been a murderer or manslayer, and proceeded as soon as possible to murder the souls and bodies of men, tempting our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit, and instigating Cain to murder his righteous brother Abel. Satan ever has been the great tempter to discord, and prompts men to excesses by which they murder themselves and each other, while his suggestions tend to ruin men's souls. He is the great promoter of falsehood of every kind, even as God uses truth as the means of all good to men. He is a liar, all his temptations are carried on by his calling evil good, and good evil, and promising impunity in sin. A lie is his language, his own, not of God. He is the father of it; the author and founder of all lies; he is the father of every liar, who trained them in the way of lying, whom they resemble and obey, with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever.

The lusts of your father you will do. The peculiar lusts of the devil are spiritual wickedness, the lusts of the intellectual powers, and corrupt reasonings; pride

and envy, and wrath and malice; enmity to good, and enticing others to evil. These lusts the devil fulfils, and those under the dominion of these lusts resemble the devil, as the child does the parent. The more there is of contemplation, contrivance, and secret complacency in sin, the more it resembles the lusts of the devil. There is no truth in him. By the truth here understand the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of man by Jesus Christ, the truth Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed; herein they did like their father the devil. It was evident the Jews were the children of this manslayer and liar, for they refused to believe in Jesus, and sought to put him to death, not only though he told them the truth, but because he did so.

Could they convict him of any kind or degree of sin? If not, how did they excuse their rejection of his doctrine, and their murderous persecution of him, notwithstanding his miracles? But the reason was plain. They did not regard his words, because they were not children of God but the children of the devil, and therefore at enmity with the truth.

And are there not multitudes who boast of being christians, in the same manner as the Jews did that they were Abraham's children? often supposing God is their Father, because they have been baptized, even as the Jews did because of circumcision. But are they born again, and partakers of a Divine and holy nature? Do they above all things love Jesus, his salvation and service? If there is nothing of this in their dispositions and conduct, but many things contrary, let them not deceive themselves, they are children of him whose works they do.

Christ having thus proved all murderers and all liars to be the devil's children, leaves it to the consciences of his hearers to say, Thou art the man.

44. *Bloomfield says*, The word rendered "murderer," must be referred to the seduction of our first parents, called manslaughter, as bringing death into the world, and all our woe, the thing being brought about by Satan's machinations. The word must not be explained away, but taken in this its proper sense, as *Lampe* and others have shown.

— Or, "When a man speaks falsehood, he speaketh of his own; for his father also is a liar."—*Scholefield*.

46. Or, "Which of you convicteth me of any error?" either in life or doctrine.

§ 83. Ver. 48—53. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

Our Lord's opponents now openly de-

clared that he was a Samaritan—one as much opposed to their religion as any Samaritan could be, adding that he was possessed, and spoke by instigation of the devil. Our Lord took no notice of the party name, as that reproach did not so immediately affect his Divine commission, but at once declared that he honoured God his Father, while their revilings proved that they were enemies to God and his honour. Observe his contempt of worldly honour; he did not court the applause of men, or covet preferment. He did not seek his own glory distinct from that of his Father, nor had he any separate interest. Those who are dead to the praises of men can safely bear their contempt. God will seek their honour that do not seek their own. If we are patient under injuries we shall find there is one that judgeth. He then solemnly assured them, that if a man embraced and steadfastly retained his holy doctrine by obedient faith, eternal death should never come upon him.

The Jews now openly declared he was possessed, for Abraham and all the prophets were dead, and did he mean that he was greater than they? Those who can truly say it is their constant care to honour God, are sufficiently armed against the reproaches of men.

In these verses we have the doctrine of the immortal happiness of believers. We have, 1. The character of a believer—he is one that keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus. 2. The privilege of a believer—he shall by no means see death for ever: so it is in the original. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it also, yet they shall shortly be where it will be no more for ever, Exod. 14. 13.

§ 83. Ver. 54-59. *Christ's discourse with the pharisees.*

Our Lord replied, that if he claimed this honour upon his own testimony alone, it was nothing, but his Father had conferred it, and testified in various ways that it belonged to him. He knew his Father fully and perfectly, and executed his commission, and if to avoid their hatred he should deny this, he should be a liar as they were. Men submit not to the righteousness of Christ because they are ignorant of God's righteousness, Rom. 10. 3. They that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, 2 Thess. 1. 8.

Those who rightly know any thing of Christ, cannot but earnestly desire to know more of him. Those who discern the dawn of the light of the Sun of righteousness, cannot but wish to see his rising. The mystery of redemption angels desire to look into, much more should we, who are more immediately concerned in it. Abraham desired to see Christ's day, though it was at a great distance; but this degenerate seed of his discerned not his day, nor bade it welcome when it came. The appearing of Christ, which gracious souls love and long for, carnal hearts dread and loathe.

He assured them that Abraham had rejoiced to see his day. The patriarch, by faith in the Divine promises, and through types, had looked forward to the appointed season of Christ's coming for the redemption of his people, and his hope of salvation was grounded on the same word. The Jews perversely took him as asserting that Abraham had conversed with him, living on earth as a man at the same time.

Jesus answered with a solemn asseveration, "Before Abraham was, I am." The construction of the passage shows it to be a declaration that he was the Great Being, who possessed an independent existence before he spake to Moses, before Abraham lived—yea, from all eternity!

"Before Abraham was, I am." This speaks Abraham a creature, and our Lord the Creator; well, therefore, might he make himself greater than Abraham: before Abraham he was, 1. As God. I am, is the name of God, Exod. 3. 14; it speaks his self-existence; he is the First and the Last, immutably the same, Rev. 1. 8; thus he was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds, Prov. 8. 23; ch. 1. 1. 2. As Mediator. He was the appointed Messiah, long before Abraham: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13. 8. This supposes his Divine nature, that he is the same in himself from eternity, Heb. 13. 8, and that he is the same to man ever since the fall. He was made of God Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, to Adam, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Shem, and all the patriarchs that lived and died by faith in him, before Abraham was born. Thus his doctrine and religion were no novelty, but were, in the substance of them, before Judaism, and ought to take place of it.

The Jews evidently understood the



words thus, and therefore were about to stone Jesus for blasphemy, but he withdrew; probably by his miraculous power he passed through the midst of them, without being perceived.

Let us steadfastly profess what we know and believe concerning God and religion, and if we are heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall trust him for the things of this life, and rejoice in the prospect of that day when the Saviour, who said, Before Abraham was, I AM, shall appear in his glory, to the confusion of his enemies, and to complete the salvation of all who believe in him.

57. Fifty years was an age much observed by the Jews.

### CHAPTER IX.

§ 84. Ver. 1—7. *Christ gives sight to one born blind.*

Christ cured many that were blind by disease or accident; here he cured one born blind. 1. That he might give an instance of his power to help in the most desperate cases. 2. That he might give a specimen of the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those who were by nature blind.

This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him, and anticipated both his prayers and expectations with a surprising cure. Christ is often found of those that seek him not, nor see him, Isa. 65. 1. And if we know or apprehend any thing of Christ, it is because we were first known of him, Gal. 4. 9.

Being at a loss what construction to put upon this providence, the disciples desire to be informed. The equity of God's dispensations is always certain, for his righteousness is as the great mountains, but not always to be accounted for, for his judgments are a great deep.

Christ says concerning uncommon calamities. 1. That they are not always punishments of sin. The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind indeed justifies God in all the miseries of human life; so that those who have the least share must say that God is kind; and those who have the largest share, must not say He is unjust; but many are more miserable than others who are not more sinful. We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners, merely because they are great sufferers. 2. That they are sometimes intended for the glory of God, and the manifesting of his works. God has

sovereignty over all his creatures, and may make them serviceable to his glory as he thinks fit, in doing or suffering; if God be glorified, either by us or in us, we were not made in vain.

The difficulties of Providence,—otherwise unaccountable, may be resolved into this—God intends in them to show himself, to declare his glory. The intentions of Providence commonly do not appear till a great while after the event.

Christ gives the reason of his own readiness to help and heal him. 1. It was his Father's will; I must work the works of him that sent me. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it. 2. Now was his opportunity. All the work he had to do in his own person here on earth, was to be done before his death. Our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. Day-time is the proper season for work, Ps. 104. 22, 23; during the day of life we must be busy, not waste day-time, nor play by day-light; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day. 3. The period of his opportunity was at hand, and therefore he would be busy. The consideration of death approaching should quicken us to improve all the opportunities of life, both our doing and getting good. The night is coming nearer and nearer. The time allotted us for our work will then be expired; when night comes, we must show our work, and receive according to the things done. Christ uses this as an argument with himself, to be diligent, though he had not opposition from within to struggle with; much more need have we to work upon our hearts these and the like considerations to quicken us. 4. His business in the world was to enlighten it. This gives, (1.) Great encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing Light. We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money and without price. (2.) A good example of usefulness in the world. What Christ saith of himself, he saith of his disciples; Ye are lights in the world, if so, Let your light shine.

The circumstances of the miracle are singular, and no doubt significant. He did not defer it till he could do it either more privately, for his greater safety, or more publicly, for his greater honour, or till the sabbath was passed, when it would give less offence; what good we have

opportunity of doing, we should do it quickly. He that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against it, will leave many a good work for ever undone, Eccl. 11. 4. In the cure observe, Christ spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle. He could have cured this man with a word, as he did others, but he chose to do it this way, to show that he is not tied to any method.

He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. Christ magnified his power in making a blind man to see by that method which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Human reason cannot judge of the propriety of the Lord's methods of operation, for he generally uses such means and instruments as men despise.

The means used in this work are very unlikely, and are made effectual only by the power of Christ. When a dark world was to be enlightened, and nations of blind souls to have their eyes opened, God chose the foolish things, and weak, and despised, for the doing of it. Christ said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. Not that this washing was needful to effect the cure; but Christ would hereby try whether he could with an implicit faith obey the orders of one he was so much a stranger to; and also how he stood affected to the tradition of the elders, which taught, that it was not lawful to wash the eyes with spittle medicinally on the sabbath-day, much less to go to a pool of water to wash them. Go, search the scriptures, attend upon the ministry, converse with the wise; this is like washing in the pool of Siloam.

The waters of Siloam had of old signified the throne and kingdom of the house of David, pointing at the Messiah, Isa. 8. 6: and the Jews who refused the waters of Shiloah, Christ's doctrine and law, and rejoiced in the tradition of the elders. The evangelist takes notice of the signification of the name. Christ is often called the Sent of God; the Messenger of the covenant, Mal. 3. 1; so that when Christ told him to go to the pool of Siloam, he did in effect send him to himself, for Christ is all in all, to the healing of souls. Christ, as a Prophet, directs us to himself as a Priest. Go, wash in the fountain opened, a fountain of life, not a pool.

The cure effected, he came seeing. Here is an instance, 1. Of the power of Christ. What cannot He do, who could

not only do this, but do it thus? No doubt, this is He that should come, for by him the blind receive their sight. 2. It is an instance of the virtue of faith and obedience. This man let Christ do what he pleased, and did what he appointed him to do, and so was cured. They that would be healed by Christ must be ruled by him. He came back from the pool wondering, and wondered at; he came seeing. This represents the benefits gracious souls find in attending on instituted ordinances according to Christ's appointment; they have gone to the pool of Siloam weak, and have come away strengthened; have gone doubting, and come away satisfied; have gone mourning, and come away rejoicing; gone trembling, and come away triumphing; have gone blind, and come away seeing, come away singing, Isa. 52. 8.

1. Some commentators have supposed that there was a space of some months between our Lord's withdrawing from the temple and his healing the blind man. Others, as *Newcome* and *Greswell*, consider that it followed immediately after, and that the notice of time, ch. 10. 22, refers to the event then recorded; but that all the circumstances, from ch. 7. 2. to 10. 21, occurred at the feast of tabernacles.

2. The pharisees held the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and it is probable that their question here was whether this man's sins in a pre-existent state had brought upon him this punishment.

5. Our Lord here assumes one of the titles given by the Jews to the Divine Being.

6. What is this mire and clay upon the eyes, but the power this world has over us in shutting out the truth?—So long as this world retains its influence, the gospel is hidden from the eyes of men, they are in a lost condition, and nothing can cleanse them from this defilement but the water of the Divine Spirit, sent from above to wash it away.—*W. Jones*.

7. The words imply that he was to wash his eyes.—See *Campbell*. *Lightfoot* shows that to besmear the eyes with spittle on the sabbath was especially forbidden by the Jewish traditions, though it was esteemed very healing. Thereby our Lord made trial of the man, how far he was above the pharisaical superstitions.

§ 84. Ver. 8—12. *The account by the blind man that received sight.*

He, on whom this miracle was wrought, was a common beggar, and generally known; by which means the truth of the miracle was the better attested, and there were the more to witness against those infidel Jews who would not believe that he had been blind, than if he had been maintained in his father's house. When it was for the advantage of his miracles that they should be wrought on those that were remarkable, Christ usually fixed on those that were made so by their poverty and misery, not by their dignity.

In answer to the inquiry, some said, This is he, for they had long known him stone-blind. Others who could not think it possible that a man born blind should thus on a sudden receive his sight, said, He is like him, and so, by their confession, if it be he, it is a great miracle that is wrought upon him.

They, whose eyes are opened, and whose hearts are cleansed by effectual grace, are the same men, yet new creatures; being known to be the same in person, yet so different in character, they live monuments to the Redeemer's glory, and recommend his grace to all who desire the same precious salvation.

This controversy was decided by the man himself. Those who are savingly enlightened by the grace of God, should be ready to own what they were before that blessed change, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14.

• Two things the neighbours inquire,

1. The manner of the cure. It is good to observe the way and method of God's works, and they will appear the more wonderful. We may apply it spiritually; it is strange that blind eyes should be opened, but more strange when we consider how they are opened; how weak the means are that are used, and how strong the opposition that is conquered. In answer to this, he gives them a plain account of the matter. Those who have experienced special instances of God's power and goodness in temporal or spiritual things, should be ready upon all occasions to communicate their experiences, for the glory of God, and the instruction and encouragement of others.

2. Concerning the author of the cure. The man had never seen Jesus; as yet he knew no more of him than that he was called, and rightly called, Jesus—a Saviour. Thus in the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but see not the hand that makes it; the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou hearest the sound of, but canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes.

§ 84. Ver. 13—17. *The pharisees question the man that had been blind.*

Some think that those who brought the man to the pharisees, did it with a good design, to show them that Jesus was one who gave proofs of a Divine mission. What hath convinced us of the truth and excellency of religion, and hath removed our prejudices against it, we should be forward, as we have opportunity, to offer

to others for their conviction. But it should seem rather, that they did it to exasperate the pharisees the more against Christ. And the crime objected here, was that, It was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. It may be asked, "Why would Christ not only work miracles on the sabbath, but work them in such a manner as he knew would give offence to the Jews?" 1. He would not seem to yield to the usurped power of the scribes and pharisees; their government was illegal, their impositions were arbitrary, and their zeal for the rituals consumed the substantial of religion; therefore Christ would not give place to them. 2. He also did it, that he might both by word and action expound the law of the fourth commandment, and vindicate it from their corrupt glosses, and so teach us, that a weekly sabbath is to be perpetually observed in the church, one day in seven; for what need was there to explain that law, if it must be presently abrogated? and also that it is not to be so ceremonially observed by us as it was by the Jews. Works of necessity and mercy are allowed, and the sabbath-rest to be kept, not so much for its own sake, as in order to the sabbath work. 3. Christ chose to work his cures on the sabbath-day, and spiritual cures are wrought mostly on the christian sabbath. How many blind eyes have been opened by the preaching the gospel on the Lord's day! how many impotent souls cured on that day!

The pharisees questioned the man concerning the cure itself. They did not believe, that is, they would not, that he was born blind. Men that seek occasion to quarrel with the clearest truths, may find it if they please; and they that resolve to hold fast deceit, will never want a handle to hold it by. This was not prudent caution, but prejudiced unbelief.

Some censured, and condemned Christ for what he had done. The doctrine upon which this censure is grounded, is very true; but the application of it to our Saviour is very unjust. He did not keep the sabbath according to the tradition of the elders, and the superstitious observances of the pharisees, but he kept it according to the command of God. Much unrighteous and uncharitable judging is occasioned by men's adding their own fancies to God's appointments. How perfect in wisdom and holiness was our

Redeemer, when his enemies could find no flaw, but were driven to renew against him the oft-refuted charge of breaking the sabbath! May we thus be enabled, by well doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Others spake in his favour. The matter of fact was plain, that this was a true miracle; the more it was searched into the more it was cleared; and the inference from it is very natural: Such things as these could never be done by a man that is a sinner; not by any mere man, in his own name, and by his own power; or not by one that is an impostor, and in that sense a sinner. Thus God defeats the counsels of his enemies by dividing them.

Observe their inquiry concerning the Author of it. They ask, What sayest thou of him, seeing that he has opened thine eyes? To this question the poor man makes a short, plain, and direct answer: He is a prophet; he is one inspired and sent of God to preach and work miracles, and deliver to the world a Divine message; one of the same rank with the other prophets.

§ 84. Ver. 18—23. *The pharisees inquire concerning him that had been born blind.*

The pharisees called the parents of the man that had received his sight. This they did, hoping to disprove the miracle. But God so overruled this counsel of theirs, that it left them under a necessity of being either convinced or confounded. The parents fully attest all they could safely say in this matter; We know that this is our son, and we know that he was born blind. They had reason to know it, inasmuch as it had cost them many a sad thought, and many a careful, troublesome hour, about him. But they cautiously decline giving any evidence concerning his cure.

It was agreed and enacted by the sanhedrim, That if any man within their jurisdiction did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. The crime designed to be prevented by this, was embracing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and discovering this by any open act, which amounted to confessing of him. They themselves did expect a Messiah, but could by no means bear to think that this Jesus should be he, because his precepts were all so contrary to their traditional laws, and because his promises and ap-

pearances were so contrary to their traditional hopes. They expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour. One so opposed to their power and interest they could never be reconciled to, nor so much as give him a fair hearing; right or wrong he must be crushed. Nor was this merely an ecclesiastical censure, which a man that made no conscience of their authority might slight; it, in effect, excluded a man from commerce with others and deprived him of liberty and property.

This law influenced the parents of the blind man. The fear of man brings a snare, Prov. 29. 25, and often makes people deny and disown Christ and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. The unlearned and poor, who are simple-hearted, readily draw proper inferences from the evidences they receive of the light of the gospel, but they whose inclinations lie another way, though ever learning, will never come to the knowledge of the truth. Observe also, that persecutions for religion only make men cowards or hypocrites; and that the censures of those in authority in the church, have often been directed against its best friends. But nothing should induce us to conceal obligations unto the Lord; what men generally term prudence and caution in this case, is unbelief, ingratitude, and a base fear of reproach and the cross.

22. Those who were "put out of the synagogue," or excommunicated, were excluded from all national benefits, and regarded as heathens.

§ 84. Ver. 24—34. *The pharisees cast out him that had been born blind.*

The pharisees probably meant, that as by some unknown means God had given the man his sight, he ought to render Him the praise, without regarding Jesus, whom they asserted to be a bad man. He replied by adverting to the certain matter of fact, which they endeavour to shake the evidence of. This one thing I know, and can be sure of, that whereas I was blind, now I see, therefore I am both able and bound to speak well of him. He relies upon his own experience of the power and goodness of the holy Jesus, and resolves to abide by it. As Christ's mercies are most valued by those who have felt the want of them, that have been blind, and now see, so the most powerful and durable affections to Christ arise from experimental knowledge of him, 1 John 1. 1.

In the work of grace in the soul, though

we cannot tell when, and how, by what instruments, and by what steps and advances, the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort of it, if we can say, through grace, "Whereas I was blind, now I see. I did live a worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me," Eph. 5. 8.

They endeavour to baffle him by a needless repetition of their inquiries. He upbraids them with their obstinate infidelity, and invincible prejudices, and they revile him as a disciple of Jesus, ver. 28.

He asks, Will ye be his disciples? Why then should ye desire to hear that which will either make you his disciples, or leave you inexcusable if ye be not? For this they scorn and revile him. The method commonly taken by unreasonable men, is to make out with railing what is wanting in truth and reason.

They taunted this man for his affection to Christ; they said, thou art his disciple. They reviled him; they cursed him; Be thou his disciple; May such a curse, saith Augustine here, ever be on us and on our children! If we take our measures of credit and disgrace from the sentiments, or clamours rather, of a blind deluded world, we shall glory in our shame, and be ashamed of our glory.

They gloried in their relation to Moses as their master; carnal professors of religion are very apt to trust to, and be proud of the dignities and privileges of their profession, while strangers to the principles and power of their religion.

1. Observe, they allege, in defence of their enmity to Christ, that which none of his followers ever denied, We know that God spake unto Moses, and, thanks be to God, we know it too, more plainly to Moses than to any other of the prophets.

2. How absurdly they urge their ignorance of Christ, as a reason to justify their contempt of him. They speak scornfully of the blessed Jesus, as if they did not think it worth while to charge their memories with a name so inconsiderable. It is certain that they might have known that he was born in Bethlehem; and by inquiring into his doctrine, miracles, and conversation, they might have known that he was sent of God. See the absurdity of infidelity; men will not know the doctrine of Christ, because they are resolved they will not believe it, and then pretend they do not believe it, because

they do not know it. Such ignorance and unbelief, which support one another, aggravate one another.

The poor man wonders that they should be strangers to a man so famous; and that they should question the Divine commission of one who had undoubtedly wrought a Divine miracle. The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction, is indeed a marvellous thing, Mark 6. 6. Those who have themselves experienced the power and grace of the Lord Jesus, do especially wonder at the wilfulness of those who reject him.

He argues strongly against them, not only that Jesus was not a sinner, but that he was of God. See here a blind man, and unlearned, judging more rightly of Divine things than the whole learned council of the pharisees. Whence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, or any ruling ecclesiastics; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions; these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights.—(99.)

He urges that God did not regard the prayers of notoriously wicked men, much less would he enable an impostor to work such a miracle in confirmation of his doctrine; so that if Jesus had not been of God, he could not have done any thing of this kind. It becomes those who have received mercy from God, to magnify the mercies they have received, and to speak honourably of them; not that thereby they may seem to be extraordinary favourites of Heaven, but that God may have so much the more glory. We may each of us know by this whether we are of God or no. What do we? What do we for God? What do we for our souls? What do we more than others?

This argument convicted the pharisees of malice and folly, and excited their indignant resentment. Being ignorant of the scripture doctrine, that all men are born in sin, they considered bodily blindness as a demonstration that this man came into the world under the Divine displeasure, and was it proper that so ignorant a wretch should presume to instruct them? They closed their ears to the truth, and excommunicated the man for his honest and wise observations.

Plain unlettered sense frequently goes further in understanding the most important matters, than all the advantages of science, which often render men too

self-sufficient to judge of them aright. When a believer knows not how to answer the objections and arguments of such enemies to the truth, he may have recourse to his own experience. What he discovers of the glory of God, the evil of sin, the depravity of his own heart, the preciousness of Christ, and the beauty of holiness, prove to him the truth of the gospel so fully, that no arguments can silence or answer the witness in himself.

81. Ver. 35—38. *Christ's words to the man that had been blind.*

Christ will own those that own him and his truth and ways. There is a particular notice taken of those that suffer in the cause of Christ and for the testimony of a good conscience. Our Lord Jesus examines his faith; Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Christ, that he might show his kingdom to be purely spiritual and divine, calls himself the Son of God. The great thing now required of us, 1 John 3. 23, and which will shortly be inquired after concerning us, is, our believing on the Son of God; by this we must stand or fall for ever.

The poor man anxiously inquired concerning the Messiah. Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Christ only can direct us to himself. How could he believe in one of whom he had not heard? Ministers tell us who the Son of God is, that we may believe on him, ch. 20. 31.

Our Lord Jesus graciously reveals himself to the man as that Son of God, on whom he must believe. Thou hast seen him; and he was indebted to the Lord Jesus for opening his eyes, that he might see him. Now he was made sensible what an unspeakable mercy it was to be cured of his blindness, that he might see the Son of God. The greatest comfort of eyesight, is, its service to faith and the interests of our souls. If we apply this to the opening the eyes of the mind, it intimates that spiritual sight is given, principally that we may see Christ, 2 Cor. 4. 6. Can we say that by faith we have seen Christ; seen him in his beauty and glory, in his ability and willingness to save, so seen him as to be satisfied concerning him, to be satisfied in him? Let us give him the praise, who opened our eyes.

Christ, by his word and Spirit, talks with those whose desires are toward him, and manifests himself to them. He is often nearer the souls that seek him, than

they themselves are aware. Doubting christians sometimes say, Where is the Lord? and fear that they are cast out from his sight, when at the same time he talks with them, and puts strength into them.

The poor man readily entertained this surprising revelation. He professed his faith in Christ; Lord, I believe thee to be the Son of God. He would not dispute any thing that Jesus said, who had showed such mercy to him, nor doubt of the truth of a doctrine which was confirmed by such signs. Believing with the heart, he thus confesses with the mouth.

He worshipped him as the Son of God manifested in the flesh. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus, he owned him to be God. All those who believe in him, will worship him.

§ 84. Ver. 39—41. *Christ reproves the pharisees.*

Here Christ's design in coming into the world; For judgment I am come, to order and administer the great affairs of the kingdom of God among men, and am invested with power, to be executed in conformity to the wise counsels of God. This great truth he explained by a metaphor taken from the miracle he had lately wrought. That they which see not, might see, and that they which see, might be made blind. Such a difference of Christ's coming is often spoken of. To some his gospel is a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. This is applicable to nations and people, that the Gentiles, who had long been destitute of the light of Divine revelation, might see it; and the Jews, who had long enjoyed it, might have the things of their peace hid from their eyes, Hos. 1. 10; 2. 23. Also to particular persons. Christ came into the world to give sight to them that were spiritually blind. Also that those who see might be made blind; that those who have high conceit of their own wisdom, and set it up in contradiction to Divine revelation, might be sealed up in ignorance and infidelity. The preaching of the cross was foolishness, and infatuation to those who by wisdom knew not God.

The pharisees cavil at this. Frequently those that deserve reproof most, are least inclined to bear a just one. Nothing fortifies men's corrupt hearts against the convictions of the word, more than a high opinion which others have of them; as

if all that gained applause with men, must obtain acceptance with God.

Christ's answer to their cavil silenced them. What they gloried in, Christ told them was their shame and ruin. If ye had been sensible of your own blindness, if when ye would see nothing else, ye could have seen the need of one to lead you, ye would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, then ye would have had no sin, ye would have submitted to his righteousness, and have been justified. Those convinced of their disease, are in the way to be cured, for there is no greater hinderance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency. But the sin of the self-conceited and self-confident remains; they reject the gospel of grace, therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned, and the power of their sin remains unbroken. Numbers of this character perish under the aggravated guilt of loving darkness, and hating the light, because their deeds are evil.

39. See note ch. 12. 47.

T. H. Horne observes that this miracle of giving sight to the man who had been born blind, was one of the most illustrious of those wrought by Christ, on account of the reluctant but distinct testimony to its reality by the Jews, given after they had endeavoured by every means to question and deny it.

## CHAPTER X.

§ 34. Ver. 1-5. *The parable of the good Shepherd.*

Here is a parable or similitude, taken from the custom of the east, in the management of sheep.

In the parable we have.

1. The marks of a thief and a robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, ver. 1. He enters not by the door, but climbs up some other way. How industrious are wicked people in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God. 2. The character that distinguishes the rightful owner. He enters in by the door, as one having authority, and he comes to do them some good office. 3. The ready entrance the shepherd finds. They had sheep folds within the outer enclosure of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to. 4. The care he takes, and the provision he makes for his sheep; The sheep hear his voice; he calls his

own sheep by name, and he leads them out to the green pastures. He does not drive them, but, as is the custom in those countries, he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they follow him, and are safe. 5. The attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd; They know his voice, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger. Suspecting some ill design, they will flee from him, knowing it is not the voice of their own shepherd.

Let us observe from the parable itself,

1. Good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the sheep of his pasture. 2. The church of God in the world is a sheep-fold, in which the children of God that were scattered abroad, are gathered together. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a wall of fire about it, Zech. 2. 5. 3. This sheep-fold is exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that lead astray and deceive, cruel persecutors that destroy and devour, grievous wolves, Acts 20. 29. 4. The great Shepherd of the sheep takes care of the flock. God is the great Shepherd, Ps. 23. 1; 80. 1. He knows them that are his, calls them by name, leads them to feed and to rest; speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to set them in the way of his steps. 5. The under-shepherds, intrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust. Ministers must serve the sheep in their spiritual interests, must feed their souls with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered. The Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, and in their conversation must be examples to the believers. 6. Those who are truly the sheep of Christ, will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers. They follow their Shepherd, for they know his voice, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart. It is dangerous to follow those in whom we discern not the voice of Christ, who would

draw us from faith in him to fancies concerning him. And those who have experienced the power and efficacy of Divine truths upon their souls, have wisdom to discover Satan's wiles, to discern between good and evil.

2. "Is a shepherd."

3. The eastern shepherd generally calls each of his sheep by a separate name, and in leading them to pasture he goes before; they follow and obey his call. The attention given by ancient shepherds to their flocks, is shown by the classical mode of styling kings the shepherds of their people.

§ 84. Ver. 6—9. *Christ the Door.*

The Jews were not aware whom our Lord meant by the thieves and robbers, and whom by the good Shepherd. Many who hear the word of Christ, do not understand it, because they will not, and because they wish to misunderstand it. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain, if we are willing to understand. We shall find one scripture expounding another, and the blessed Spirit interpreter to the blessed Jesus.

Christ, in the parable, distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he enters by the door. In explaining the parable he makes himself both the Door by which the Shepherd enters, and the Shepherd that enters in by the door.

Christ is the Door. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds; I am the Door of the sheep-fold; the Door of the church. And what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus between it and all its enemies? He is as a door open, for passage and communication. By Christ, as the Door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, ch. 14. 6. We go in and out in a religious walk, assisted by him, accepted in him. By him God comes to his church, and communicates himself to it. By him, as the Door, the sheep are at last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, Matt. 25: 34. More particularly, none who come not in by him, are to be accounted pastors, but thieves and robbers, ver. 1. This refers to those who had the character of shepherds in Israel, but exercised their office without regard to the Messiah, or other expectations of him than what were suggested by their own carnal interest.

Those who were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godli-

ness, could by no means approve the traditions of the elders, for nothing is less pleasing to a soul truly devout than hypocritical devotions.

Christ is the Door of the sheep, ver. 9. By me, through me as the Door, if any man enter into the sheep-fold as one of the fold, he shall be saved; shall not only be safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy.

Here are, 1. Plain directions how to come into the fold—we must come in by Jesus Christ as the Door. By faith in him as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. None are members of the kingdom of God among men but those willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer.

2. Precious promises to those that observe this direction: They shall be saved hereafter; that is the privilege of their home. These sheep shall be saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be for ever happy. In the mean time they shall go in and out, and find pasture; that is the privilege of their way. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ. In public, in private, they have the word of God to converse with, by which their spiritual life is supported and nourished, and out of which their gracious desires are satisfied. God, our great Owner, the sheep of whose pasture we are by creation, has constituted his son Jesus to be our Shepherd; here he owns the relation again and again. Christ has all that care of his church, and every believer, which a good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church and every believer, which the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

8. These words are directed against the scribes and pharisees considered as teachers, and there is no reason to confine it to those of that time. There is little doubt that the greater part of the teachers after the captivity were evil characters. *Campbell and Bloomfield.*

§ 84. Ver. 10—18. *Christ the good Shepherd.*

1. Christ is a Shepherd, and not as the thief. Those who steal away the scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue; steal away the sacraments by maiming them and altering the property of them; those who steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, kill and destroy; for ignorance



and idolatry are destructive. Those whom they cannot steal from the flock of Christ, they aim to destroy as to their bodies by persecutions and massacres. In opposition to the design of the thief, or the design of the scribes and pharisees, Christ saith, I am come among men, 1. That they might have life. Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened, Gen. 2 17; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified. 2. That they might have abundance, or, might have it abundantly. Life in abundance is eternal life; life without death, or fear of death; life, and much more. Christ came to give his life for the sheep. It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so; so did David. Such a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who counted not his life dear to him, in comparison with their salvation. But it was the prerogative of the great Shepherd to give his life to purchase his flock, Acts 20. 28; to satisfy for their trespasses, and to shed his blood to cleanse them.

2. Christ is a good Shepherd; many who were not thieves, yet were very careless in discharging their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged: foolish shepherds, idol shepherds, Zech. 11. 15, 17. In opposition to these, Christ here calls himself the good Shepherd. None so skilful, so faithful, so tender as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he. He proves himself so, in opposition to all hirelings, ver. 11, 14.

Observe, the carelessness of the unfaithful shepherd described, ver. 12, 13. Bad principles are the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls, in trying times, to betray their trust, and in quiet times not to mind it? What makes them false, and trifling, and self-seeking? It is because they are hirelings, and care not for the sheep. The labourer is worthy of support; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry; but those are hirelings who love the wages more than the work. The work of their place is the least of their care; they are unconcerned in the souls of others, their desire is to be their brothers' lords,\* not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they seek their own things, and do not, like Timothy, naturally care for the state of

souls; what can be expected but that they will flee when the wolf comes? But the blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchman.

Christ knows his sheep, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil. He visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them. He is known of them. Christ's knowing his sheep, is put before their knowing him; he knew and loved us first, 1 John 4. 19; it is not so much our knowing him as being known of him, that is our happiness, Gal. 4. 9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep, that they know him from all pretenders and intruders; know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death.

The Lord Jesus knows whom he hath chosen, and is sure of them, ch. 13. 18; they also know whom they have trusted and are sure of him, 2 Tim. 1. 12; and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge the Father and the Son had of each other's mind, when the counsel of peace was between them.

He is acquainted with those who are hereafter to be of his flock, ver. 16. Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called his sheep, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were uncalled, and many of them unborn, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in counsels of Divine love from eternity.

Thus he showed the Jews, that although they might reject him yet he would assuredly have a ransomed flock. Them also he must bring; for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them. He must bring them, or he would not be true to his undertaking.

Observe the happy effect and consequence of this—They shall hear my voice. Faith comes by hearing; our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both means and evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. There shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Both Jews and Gentiles, on turning to the faith of Christ, shall be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of one church. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him.

Christ's offering up himself for his sheep, is another proof of his being a good

Shepherd, and in this he yet more commended his love, ver. 15, 17, 18. 1. He declares his purpose of dying for his flock. 2. He takes off the offence of the cross. He was perfectly voluntary in his sufferings and death. See here the power of Christ, as the Lord of life. He had power to keep his life, so that it could not be wrested from him without his own consent. He had power to lay down his life, which appeared when he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. He had authority to do it. We are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased. He had power to take it again; we have not; our life, once laid down, is as water spilt upon the ground; but Christ could resume his life again.

See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him by law, nor extort it by force, he laid it down of himself for our redemption. He offered himself to be the *Saviour*—Lo, I come; and the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself for the *Sacrifice*—Here am I, to go thy will, O God; by the which will we are sanctified, Heb. 10. 10. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself.

From hence it is plain what was the purpose of the death of Christ. He died 1. In the place and stead of men. 2. To obtain their liberation from the punishment of sin, or, to obtain pardon of their sin. 3. That his death should be sufficient to obtain the pardon of sin. Our Lord says, not that he laid down his life for his doctrine, but for his sheep.—(75.)

He did this by the express order and appointment of his Father. This commandment have I received of my Father; not such a commandment as made what he did necessary, prior to his own undertaking; but this was the law of mediation, which he was willing to have written in his heart, so as to delight in doing the will of God according to it, Ps. 40. 8.

Thus Christ came that sinners might have life, and have it more abundantly; for their good he became poor, he abased himself, he laboured, he agonized, and died! While we admire and adore his infinite condescension and compassion, and his unspeakable love to such vile enemies, let us inquire what pastors of the church are most like him. Christ is

the good Shepherd, the perfect model according to which they should be formed.

16. This is the unequivocal language of almighty and efficient Power.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 84. Ver. 19—21. *The Jews' opinions concerning Christ.*

A division was occasioned by the sayings of Christ, which set the Jews at variance, as Christ foresaw, Luke 12. 51. But it is better that men should be divided about the doctrine of Christ, than united in the service of sin, Luke 11. 21. Some reproached him as a demoniac. The worst characters are put upon the best men. They ridicule his hearers. Satan ruins many, by putting them out of conceit with the word and ordinances, representing it as weak and silly to attend them. Men would not be laughed out of their necessary food, and yet suffer themselves thus to be laughed out of what is more necessary!

Others defended Christ and his discourse. They plead the excellency of his doctrine: it is certain that the doctrine of Christ is no doctrine of devils, for it is levelled directly against the devil's kingdom, and Satan is too subtle to be divided against himself. There is so much holiness in the words of Christ, we may conclude they are not from hell, therefore must be from heaven. Also they plead the power of his miracles. Devils are not lords of the power of nature, so as to be able to work such miracles; nor are they such friends to mankind, as to be willing to work them if they were able. Satan would rather blind men's eyes than open them.

If our zeal and earnestness in the cause of Christ, and especially in the blessed work of bringing his sheep into his fold, bring upon us evil names and reproaches, let us not heed it, but remember our Master was thus reproached before us.

§ 100. Ver. 22—30. *Christ's discourse at the feast of dedication.*

This conference was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter. Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch: he walked, ready to hear any that applied to him. Those who have any thing to say to Christ, may find him in the temple. The Jewish rulers desired Jesus to say whether he was the Messiah or not. It was the effect of their infidelity and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had fully proved himself to be the Christ, they were still in doubt. The

struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. It was an instance of their presumption, that they laid the blame of their doubting on Christ himself, as if he made them doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves doubt.

In fact, they readily understood his meaning, but could not form his words into an explicit charge against him. He said he had already told them who he was, but they had not believed in him, though the works he did sufficiently proved it. The true reason they did not believe in him, was the want of that temper which characterised his sheep. Not being of that number, they were influenced by the pride and enmity of their carnal hearts. He describes the gracious disposition and happy state of his sheep; they heard and believed his word, followed him as his faithful disciples, and none of them should perish.

Man has a living soul, therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul, therefore the happiness provided is eternal life.

As his Father, who gave them, was greater than any creatures of the universe, none could pluck them out of his almighty hands, and He and the Father were one. Thus he was able to defend his sheep against all their enemies, which proves he claimed Divine power and perfection, equal to that of the Father.

In our Lord's declaration, ver. 30, "I and the Father are one," the Deity of Christ, and his equality with the Father, are so distinctly and unequivocally asserted, that it is difficult to conceive how any other than its proper literal meaning could ever be given to it.—(33.)

22. The feast of dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabeus in commemoration of cleansing the temple after it had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. It lasted eight days in the month Cisleu, corresponding with December.

30. The union here spoken of is a union of power, for the bestowment of the most important blessings, for sovereign and effectual preservation from spiritual danger and eternal ruin, ver. 28. Jesus affirmed the adequacy of his own power for the certain salvation of his sincere followers, as well as that of God his Father, and proceeds to furnish a sufficient ground of reason for it, "I and the Father are one." The union of power is shown to be an identity of power.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 100. Ver. 31—38. *The Jews attempt to stone Jesus.*

The Jews well understood the extent of our Lord's claim, and deeming it blasphemy, prepared to stone him. When Jesus saw their fury, he inquired for which of his miracles they were about to put him to death. They replied, that it was for blasphemy: because he, whom they deemed a man, spake as the Almighty God; and, observe, he did not charge them with misrepresentation.

The Jewish rulers in scripture are called gods, Ps. 82. 6, as the delegates and types of the Messiah, the Lord and King of Israel, from the beginning, because they were commissioned to administer justice to the nation. The propriety of calling them gods to whom the word of God came, must arise from their relation to the promised Messiah. Had he not been truly God, they had not typically been called gods. What right, therefore, had the Jews to say to Him whom the Father had separated and consecrated from the beginning, and at length had sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because he declared himself to be the Son of God. The Messiah was predicted under this title, Ps. 2. 7. He was the Messiah; therefore the Son of God, and one with the Father.

The Father sanctified him, that is, designed, and set him apart to the office of Mediator, qualified and fitted him for that office. Sanctifying is the same with sealing, ch. 6. 27. Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, therefore will employ none but such as he makes holy.

Our Lord added, that they might be allowed to disbelieve him, if he did not the works of his Father; that is, such as showed almighty power; but as he performed such works, let them not refuse to believe his mysterious union with the Father, and that mutual indwelling of which he spake. As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and providence, so the invisible things of the Redeemer are seen by his works of power and mercy.

His works proclaim him God over all, blessed for evermore, that all may know and believe He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. Modern opposers, who call it idolatry to worship Jesus as the

Son of God, would have charged him with blasphemy, had they heard these discourses; such enemies only deprive themselves of the blessings of his salvation.

The Father was in the Son, ver. 38, so that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and by Divine power he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father, that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of His mind, not by communication, but consciousness. This we must know; not know and explain, for we cannot by searching find it out to perfection, but know and believe; acknowledging and adoring the depth, when we cannot find the bottom.

§ 101. Ver. 39—42. *Our Lord departs from Jerusalem.*

The Jews again endeavoured to apprehend Jesus, but he was pleased to evade their malice at that time also.

No weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper, Ps. 2.5. He escaped, not because he was afraid to suffer, but because his hour was not come. And He who knew how to deliver himself, no doubt knows how to deliver the godly out of their temptations, and to make a way for them to escape.

He went away again beyond Jordan. This great Benefactor was never out of his way, for wherever he came, there was work to be done. There he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the plain country people, than among the wise, the mighty, the noble, 1 Cor. 1. 26, 27.

They flocked after Jesus, and reasoned in his favour, as those at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They considered that Christ far exceeded John Baptist in power. Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. And he exactly answered to John Baptist's testimony.

When we know Christ experimentally, we find all that the scripture saith of him is true: and that the reality exceeds the report. They were prepared to believe that Jesus was the Christ, in whom they saw the things accomplished John had foretold among them.

Where preaching the doctrine of repentance has had desired success, there preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel grace is most likely to prosper.

The effects of the testimony of faithful ministers often do not appear till they have entered into their rest; then they spring up, and bring forth a blessed harvest, to the glory of God and the good of immortal souls.

## CHAPTER XI.

§ 102. Ver. 1—6. *The sickness of Lazarus.*

Here was a happy, well-ordered family with which Christ was very conversant; a brother and sisters dwelling together in unity. One is particularly described to be Mary, who anointed the Lord with ointment. Her brother Lazarus (in Hebrew Eleazar) was sick; and the sickness of those we love is our affliction.

The sisters knew that Jesus was beyond Jordan, and they sent to acquaint him with their affliction. Though God knows all our wants, and griefs, and cares, he will know them from us. The message they sent, was not prescribing, but relating the case with a powerful plea, Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick. They do not say, He whom thou lovest. Our greatest encouragements in prayer are from God himself and from his grace. They do not say, Lord, behold, he who loveth thee, but, He whom thou lovest. Our love to him is not worth speaking of, but his to us can never be spoken of enough. It is no new thing for those-whom Christ loves, to be sick; bodily distempers correct the corruption, and try the graces of God's people.

He came not to preserve his people from these afflictions, but to save them from their sins, and from the wrath to come; however, it behoves us to apply to Him in behalf of our friends and relatives when sick and afflicted; if we can plead that they are the objects of his special love, we urge the best arguments in their favour, yet we must leave it to his own wisdom to direct the exercise of his love.

Christ declared the event of the sickness, probably as a message to the sisters of Lazarus. He states, 1. This sickness is not unto death; it was mortal, proved fatal; and no doubt Lazarus was truly dead for four days. But that was not the final effect of this sickness. He died,

and yet it might be said he did not die. Death is an everlasting farewell to this world; the way whence we shall not return; in this sense it was not unto death.

2. It is for the glory of God, that an opportunity may be given for the manifestation of God's glorious power. Let this reconcile us to the darkest dispensations of Providence. They are all for the glory of God; this sickness, this loss, this disappointment, are so; and if God be glorified, we ought to be satisfied, Lev. 10. 3. It was that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, as it gave him occasion to work that glorious miracle.

Let this comfort those whom Christ loves, under all their grievances, that the design of all is, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby; his wisdom, power, and goodness glorified in supporting and relieving them; see 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10.

Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Those families are greatly favoured in which love and peace abound. But those are most happy whom Jesus loves, and by whom he is beloved. Alas, that this should seldom be the case with every person, even in small families.

It is said, he loved them, and yet he lingered; but he loved them, and therefore he lingered. He abode two days in the same place where he was. He loved them; our Lord loved each person in this family, both as true disciples, and as intimate and affectionate friends, therefore he deferred coming to them, that their trial might at last be found to praise and honour. He loved them, he designed to work a miracle for their relief, therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be dead and buried before he came. God has gracious intentions, even in seeming delays. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, is delayed, it does but stay the right time, every thing is beautiful in its season.

1. "There was a certain person sick, Lazarus, who was of Bethany, a native of the village of Mary, and of Martha, her sister." *Greswell* shows that the manner in which Bethany is here spoken of, indicated that Lazarus was not a native of the place, but a resident at it; he also considers that the village to which the family belonged was in Galilee, see Luke 10. 38, the name of which is left unmentioned in common with other villages referred to in the gospels. See also ch. 12. 1.

§ 102, Ver. 8-10. *Christ proposes to return to Judea.*

Christ gave notice to his disciples of

his purpose to go into Judea toward Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he said, Let us go unto Judea again; Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it; is with them, even when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

They remind him of his danger there not long before. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does. They marvel that he will go thither again. Christ's ways in passing by offences are above our ways. Wilt thou expose thyself amongst a people who are so desperately enraged against thee? Had Christ been minded to avoid suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him; but he would not, he could not go back. Yet, while the disciples show concern for his safety, they discover distrust of his power, and secret fear of suffering themselves.

We are often apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of Hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety; we have therefore need to distinguish our principles.

Christ answered this objection: Are there not twelve hours in the day? The Jews divided every day into twelve hours, longer or shorter, according as the days were. Man's life is a day, divided into divers ages, states, and opportunities, as into hours shorter or longer, as God has appointed; the consideration of this should make us not only very busy, as to the work of life, but also very easy as to the perils of life; our day shall be lengthened out till our work is done, and our testimony finished. This Christ applies to his case, he must go to Judea, because he had a clear call to go.

1. He shows the comfort and satisfaction a man has while in the way of his duty, as prescribed by the word of God, and determined by the providence of God. If any man walk in the day, he stumbles not; if a man keep close to his duty, and set the will of God before him as his rule, he does not hesitate in his own mind, but walking uprightly, walks surely, and with holy confidence. A true believer relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end; he sees those two great lights; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers. Christ, wherever he went,

walked in the day, and so shall we, if we follow his steps.

2. He shows the pain and peril a man is in, who walks ~~not~~ according to this rule. If a man walk in the way of his heart, and according to the course of this world—if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God, he falls into temptations and snares; he stumbles, because there is no light in him, for light *in us* is to our moral actions that which light *about us* is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go with him, and fear no evil. Perhaps he also referred to the horror under which his soul was during his outward sufferings, which was as the gloom of night compared with the light of day, when compared with his present sense of his Father's love, and delight in him.

§ 102. Ver. 11—16. *The death of Lazarus.*

Here we have, 1. Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus. Christ calls a believer his friend; Our friend Lazarus. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and believers, and friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, with him and with each other, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer.

He calls the death of a believer a sleep—He sleepeth. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus' daughter, because they were to be raised again speedily; but since we are sure to rise again at the last, why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life, make it as easy to us to put off the body and die, as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A true christian, when he dies, does but sleep; he rests from the labours of the past day. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only a short rest, but death is the end of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; the body sleeps, undisturbed. Though the body decay, it will rise in the morning of the resurrection as if it never had seen corruption.

2. Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus; But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. As sleep is a resemblance of death, so a man's waking out of sleep when he is

called, especially when he is called by his own name, is an emblem of the resurrection, Job 14. 15, Then shalt thou call, and I will answer thee.

This is a beautiful expression denoting death, common to all languages, but by sleep the sacred writers especially shadow forth the death of the righteous; and there is indeed a propriety in the expression, that he who was to "perfume the grave," and triumph over death, should already adapt his language to what his power should effect, and bid us not to look on the dark and carnal side of death, but to that placid sleep which to his faithful servants precedes a glorious rising again to enter into the joy of their Lord.—(75.)

They said, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. This speaks their concern for their friend Lazarus; now they heard he slept, they concluded the worst was past. Yet it speaks greater concern for themselves, for hereby they insinuate that it was now needless for Christ to go to him, and expose himself and them. Thus we are willing to hope that the good work we are called to do, will do itself, or will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it. This mistake of theirs is here rectified, ver. 13; Jesus spake of his death. See here how dull of understanding Christ's disciples as yet were. What Christ undertakes to do, we may be sure, is something great and uncommon, a work worthy of himself. How carefully this error is corrected; Jesus spake of his death. Those that use similitudes, should explain themselves, to prevent mistakes.

Jesus made a plain declaration of the death of Lazarus, and his resolution to go to Bethany; I am glad for your sakes that I was not there. If he had been there time enough, Christ would have healed his disease, and prevented his death; but then his disciples would have seen no further proof of their Master's power than what they had often seen. And when he raised him from the dead, many were brought to believe on him, ver. 45; and there was much done towards perfecting the faith of those that believed. Let us go to him; death cannot separate from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his call.

Thomas knew the malice of the Jews and the counsels of God, of which Jesus had often told them, so that it was no strange supposition that he was now going

to die. And now Thomas discovers a gracious readiness to die with Christ, flowing from strong affections to his Master, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterwards; but many have lively affections, and make confident resolutions, whose views are confused, and who are in no wise prepared for the day of trial. Also a zealous desire to bring his fellow-disciples into the same frame; Let us go and die with him—who would desire to survive such a Master? Thus, in difficult times Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, Let us die with him. Consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls us.

§ 102. Ver. 17—32. *Christ arrives at Bethany.*

To Bethany Christ came, and found his friend Lazarus in the grave, and his friends who survived, in grief. Ordinarily where death is, there are mourners. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested; yet it was made a house of mourning. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart, ch. 14. 1, not from the house. Where there are mourners, there ought to be comforters. To comfort them is a duty we owe to those in sorrow; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, whatever occasion we have to be afflicted concerning ourselves, who are left behind, and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning those who are gone before us to happiness.

This visit the Jews made to Martha and Mary, is evidence that they were respected and estimable. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews should come together to comfort the mourners, that they might be unexceptionable witnesses of the miracle. God's counsel so ordered it, that these should come together, to bear testimony to it, that all infidelity might be silenced.

It seems Martha earnestly expected Christ's arrival, and when the good news was brought that Jesus was coming, she hastened to go and meet Jesus. When God, by his grace or providence, is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer, to meet him.

When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary sat still in the house. Mary's natural temper was contemplative; this

formerly had been an advantage to her, when it set her at Christ's feet, to hear his word; and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions which Martha was cumbered with; but now, in the day of affliction, that same temper disposed her to melancholy. See here how much it will be our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and to improve the advantages of our natural tempers.

1. Martha complains of Christ's long absence and delay. Here is some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's power, that though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death; she believed his pity, that if he had but seen Lazarus, he would have prevented so sad a breach, for his compassions fail not. But here are sad instances of unbelief, for she limits the power of Christ in saying, If thou hadst been here; whereas she ought to have known that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him; and as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it. Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven. Though she has not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, who had been so long dead, yet she humbly recommends the case to the compassion of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us refer ourselves to God; let him do as seemeth him good. When we know not what to pray for, it is our comfort that the great Intercessor knows what to ask for us, and is always heard. But how weak her faith was! she only says, Thou canst obtain whatever thou prayest for; she forgot that the Son has life in himself, he wrought miracles by his own power.

Christ assured Martha that Lazarus should rise again. She expressed her firm belief that he would arise to eternal life at the general resurrection, but intimated that this could not make up to her the heavy loss she had sustained. To enlarge her expectations, our Lord declared himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. In and through Him, the Lord from heaven, and through his undertaking and work as Mediator, all the dead are to rise

again. He is the Author of the Resurrection; it will be effected by his power, his salvation alone will render it a blessing. In every sense he is the Resurrection; the source, the substance, the first fruits, the efficient cause of it. He is the Fountain, the Support, and the Giver of life, spiritual and eternal, no man can have it but by and from him.

To this Jesus added, that whosoever believed in him, though like Lazarus, he were outwardly dead, yet he should surely live; his soul would live in heaven when his body lay in the grave, and his body would surely rise again to immortal life, by virtue of his union with Him, "the Resurrection and the Life." Also every one who was still alive and believed in Him, should be preserved from dying for ever—that is, the death of the body would be no more than a peaceful sleep. The soul would continue to live in happiness; and after the resurrection, both body and soul would be preserved from all evil to eternity. Our Lord demanded of Martha whether she believed this? She answered by an open confession of her faith in him as the Messiah, and the Son of God, whom the prophets had foretold, as He that should come into the world. ●

When we have read or heard the word of Christ, concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to ourselves, Do we believe this, this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my belief of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it, so that I can say, Not only this I believe, but thus I believe it? The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such impression upon us as they do, if we believed the things of eternity as we ought.

Martha having made confession of her faith in Jesus, and obtained some comfort from his words, returned and told her sister that the Master was come, and asked for her, by which it appears that more conversation passed than is here recorded. When Christ our Master comes, he calls for us. He comes in his word and ordinances, and calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for thee in particular, for thee by name, Ps. 27. 8. And if he call thee he will cure thee, he will comfort thee.

The Jews, thinking that Martha went to the grave to indulge her grief, followed

her, and thus witnessed the miracle. Mary expressed herself to Jesus in the same complaining way her sister had done, but her posture was humble and submissive. Those who in a day of peace set themselves at Christ's feet to receive instructions from him, may with comfort and confidence, in a day of trouble, cast themselves at his feet, with hope to find favour with him. She fell at his feet, as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring to his good will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction, we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and in patient resignation to the Divine will.

Are we dejected by the troubles of life and the prospect of the grave? Lord, pardon our unbelief, increase our faith, help us assuredly to hope in thee as the Christ, the Son of God, who camest into the world to save sinners, for Jesus hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

26. Or, "Shall not die for ever."

31. It was, and is very customary in the east, for females to resort to the graves of deceased relatives, to weep over them. Among the Jews the mourning lasted seven days, during which their friends came to condole with them. After visiting the grave, they sat round the chief mourner, who here appears, ver. 21, 31, to have been Mary, on low couches, or on the ground.

§ 102. Ver. 33—46. *Christ raises Lazarus.*

Christ's tender sympathy with these afflicted friends appeared three ways.

1. By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit. Those who truly love their friends, will share in their joys and griefs. Christ not only seemed concerned, but groaned in the spirit; he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. He was troubled. He troubled himself; so the phrase is. He had all the passions and affections of the human nature, for in all things he must be like to his brethren; but he had perfect command of them, he never was troubled but when he saw cause. In all their afflictions he is afflicted.

2. His concern for them appeared by his kind inquiry after the remains of his deceased friend. Being found in fashion as a man, he accommodates himself to the way and manner of the sons of men. He is not ignorant, but he makes as if he were, saith Augustine here. He inquired where the grave was, lest, if he had gone straight to it of his own knowledge, the unbelieving Jews should have suspected



a collusion. Many expositors observe this from Chrysostom.

3. It appeared by his tears. As he went to the grave, Jesus wept. A short verse, but it affords very useful instruction. (1.) That Jesus Christ was really and truly man; he partook not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. (2.) That he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as was foretold, Isa. 63. 3. (3.) Tears of compassion well become christians, and make them most resemble Christ. It is a relief to those in sorrow, to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as the Lord Jesus.

That sensibility of which many are proud while they weep for fictitious distress, but are callous to real woe, Christ never sanctioned; but he set us an example to withdraw from scenes of giddy mirth, that we may sympathize with, and comfort the afflicted.

And observe what a Friend we have, before whom to spread all the sins and sorrows wherewith we are oppressed. He is justly called, The Consolation of Israel; and if we seek him, he will be found of us. We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.—(61.)

The Jews noticed this, and expressed their surprise at the greatness of his sympathy with the deceased, but some took occasion from it to increase their own prejudices and those of their neighbours, inferring from the death of Lazarus that Christ's miracles were only apparent. It is grievous to see men quarrelling with those truths, by the belief of which alone they can be saved from everlasting misery, thus rejecting their only remedy with obstinate contempt.

Christ soon convinced these whisperers that he could have prevented his death, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work; but he did it not, because he would glorify himself the more.

Again groaning in himself, he came to the grave. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly of Jerusalem, Matt. 23. 37. Ministers, when sent to raise dead souls, by preaching the gospel, should be much affected with the deplorable condition of those they preach to, and pray for.

The grave is here described—a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus had this stone removed, that the bystanders might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out. It is a good step toward the raising of a soul to spiritual life, when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it has to say.

Martha objected, and thereby showed how low her hopes were, respecting her brother's restoration. Her suggesting that the miracle could not be done, puts the more honour upon Him that did it.

Christ reproved Martha. Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? It is probable that he had said this to her, when she had said, Lord, I believe. Our Lord Jesus assures us that a sincere faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision. If we will take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight. But we have need to be often reminded of these sure mercies with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given; Only believe. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need that he should put us in mind of it by his Spirit.

Our Lord Jesus applied himself to his Father in heaven. He lifted up his eyes: it is especially charged upon us thereby to lift up our hearts to God in the heavens. What is prayer, but the ascent of the soul to God, and the directing its affections heavenward? He has here taught us, by his own example, to call God Father, in prayer, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with humble reverence, yet with holy boldness; when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge former favours. But our Saviour's thanksgiving here, expressed the unshaken assurance he had of effecting this miracle; Father, I thank thee, that my will and thine are, in this, as always, the same. But Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to enter into the holiest.

No other can pretend to such assurance as Christ had; yet we may, by faith in the promise, have a prospect of mercy, may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks. He had the Divine power with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be the counsel of God's will.

It was blasphemously suggested by the pharisees, that Jesus wrought his miracles by compact with Satan. To evidence the contrary, he openly made this address to God, with uplifted eyes and loud voice, professing his communication with Heaven and dependence on Heaven, that they might be convinced that the Father had sent him as his beloved Son into the world, to perform the works and to teach the doctrines they had seen and heard.

Christ then cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He could have raised Lazarus by the silent exertion of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call; hereby he signified the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus; he spake, and it was done. It was typical of other works of wonder, particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This call was a figure, 1. Of the gospel call by which dead souls are brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of, ch. 5. 25; and of his word as the means; ch. 6. 63. They who infer from the commands of the word, to turn and live, that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself, might as well infer from this call to Lazarus, that he had power to raise himself to life. 2. Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust shall be awakened, and summoned before the great tribunal, when Christ shall descend with a shout, a call, or command, like this, Come forth. See Ps. 50. 4. He shall call both to the heavens for their souls, and to the earth for their bodies, that he may judge his people. He does not say unto him, Live, for he himself must give life, but he saith to him, Move. When by the grace of Christ we live spiritually, we must stir up ourselves to move; the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened, therefore they must come forth.

Power went with the word of Christ, to reunite the soul and body of Lazarus,

then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible progress to satisfy our curiosity, but by its visible effects to confirm our faith. Do any ask whether Lazarus could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world—let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, that he who was dead came forth. This miracle was wrought, 1. Speedily. Nothing intervenes between the command, Come forth, and the effect, He came forth. Thus the change in the resurrection will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1 Cor. 15. 52. Almighty power can do it in an instant. 2. Perfectly. He was thoroughly revived, and returned not only to life, but health. He was raised to life as other men.

It would be vain for us to endeavour to conceive the mixed and varied affections which agitated the relatives of Lazarus, and the other spectators of this wondrous scene. And who can express the majesty and the condescension of the Redeemer? How safely may we commit the health and life of our dearest relatives into his hand! how cheerfully go down to the grave in the sure hope of a glorious resurrection! Our sharpest trials will issue in more abundant comfort if we believe in Him; and they may be made to promote his glory in the conversion of our fellow-creatures. And while we expect help from Him alone, we must not neglect using the means he has instituted, or refuse to obey the commandments he has given us ability to comply with. The sinner cannot quicken his own soul, but he is to use the means of grace—the believer cannot sanctify himself, but he is to lay aside every weight and incumbrance. We cannot convert our relatives and friends, but we should instruct, warn, and invite them.

35 and 43. *Gilly* remarks that these two verses furnish the distinguishing characteristics of Christ. His compassion as the Son of man, his human nature; and his authority as the Son of God, manifesting his Divinity.

44. The Jewish sepulchres often were excavations in the rocks, closed at the entrance by a stone, such was the one here mentioned, see ver. 38.

The bodies were placed, without coffins, in niches cut in the sides of these places. Lazarus, though swathed with bandages, could move down from one of these to the floor, but that he could not walk till unbound is plain from ver. 44.

*Grotius* considers that the other evangelists wrote during the life of Lazarus, and therefore did not mention this miracle, lest they might again excite the hatred of the Jews against him.

The progressive manifestations of almighty power in the three persons recorded to have been raised by our Lord from the dead, are very observable. Jairus' daughter recently departed, the widow's son on his way to the grave, Lazarus from the grave and corruption.

§ 102. Ver. 47—53. *The pharisees consult against Christ.*

A more conclusive discovery of the madness that is in man's heart, and of its desperate enmity against God, can scarcely be conceived than that here recorded. The Jewish rulers were neither convinced nor overawed by this astonishing display of our Lord's power. Determined not to believe that the miracles of Jesus were evidences that he was sent of God, they concluded that, if they did not interpose, Jesus would be acknowledged by the people as the Messiah, the displeasure of the Romans be excited, and their nation destroyed. They despised his mean appearance, so different from their carnal ideas, and did not think that he could protect them. But their hatred of his holy doctrine and example, were at least equally powerful motives. Persecutors deem it a public calamity when numbers are converted to Jesus.

Caiaphas was a bold, profane politician: whether Jesus deserved death or not, he considered that he should be sacrificed—thinking it expedient that even an innocent person should be put to death rather than that the safety of the nation should be endangered. Infidel politicians vainly imagine that the end will justify all the means used to accomplish it.

Some of the sanhedrim were sensible that they had no just cause for taking away the life of Jesus, may not this have arisen from Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea objecting to them the unlawfulness of their proceedings? Of the latter we read, Luke 23. 50, 51, that he did not concur in their resolutions.—(77.)

While Caiaphas uttered his wicked counsel, God was pleased to guide his tongue to utter a remarkable prophecy, by his declaring it expedient that the holy Jesus should be made an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people, suffering one for all, the Just instead of the unjust, that by his death he might save them from perishing. Words of prophecy in the mouth, are not infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. The evangelist here expounds the meaning, not of Caiaphas, but that of the Holy Spirit, who spake by him; and thus this

bitter enemy of Christ was constrained to bear testimony to the great doctrine of salvation through his atoning blood; even as Balaam was constrained to bless Israel when bent upon cursing. The counsel of Caiaphas determined the sanhedrim to devise measures for putting Jesus to death.

That calamity which we seek to escape by sin, we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and they who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest, will find Jerusalem a more burdensome stone than they suppose it is, Zech. 12. 3. The fear of the wicked shall come upon them.

The Lord will honour his own institutions, notwithstanding men's wickedness, and will extort confessions to his truth from his implacable enemies. Once, and but once, it was expedient that the innocent should suffer for the guilty. The Saviour willingly died to gather the children of God into his kingdom.

Christ's dying is,

1. The great attractive of our hearts; for this end he is lifted up to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering of them into Christ as their ruler and refuge, and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love.

2. The great centre of our unity. They are one with Christ, one body, one spirit, and one with each other, in him. All the saints, in all places and ages, meet in him, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ, by the merit of his death, recommended all the saints in one to the grace and favour of God, Heb. 2. 11, 13; and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection one of another, ch. 13. 34.

47. *Bloomfield* suggests, that this verse contains the opinion of one party in the sanhedrim, and ver. 48 that of another, both of whom Caiaphas rebuked.

48. As our Lord did not possess the external proofs of royalty, the sanhedrim would not believe that he could be able to oppose the Roman power. They were convinced of the miraculous powers of our Lord, and probably knew him as a prophet, but not as the Messiah, whom they expected to appear with the insignia of power, and to enhance to the utmost the temporal dominion of the Jews.—*Townsend.*

§ 110. Ver. 54—57. *The Jews seek for Jesus.*

It was our Lord's purpose to suffer

death at the ensuing feast of the passover. He was pleased therefore to retire to an obscure part of the country, where he abode with his disciples till within a few days of that solemnity. The Jews who went up to Jerusalem some time before, to perform such rites as were appointed for their purification, sought for him. Those who had contracted ceremonial pollution came to perform the rites of cleansing according to the law, for else they might not eat the passover, Numb. 9. 6. Thus before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance; by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and so compass God's altar. Or, it was a voluntary purification, by fasting, prayer, and other religious exercises, which many, more devout than their neighbours, spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do at Jerusalem, because of the temple service. Thus must we solemnly prepare when we expect to meet God.

They probably did this from different motives. They questioned each other whether Jesus would dare to come to the feast, seeing proclamation had been made, requiring any who knew where he was, to inform the council, that they might apprehend him. It aggravates the sins of wicked rulers, that they make those under them instruments of their unrighteousness. But though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he was not discovered.

No devices of man can derange the purposes of God; while hypocrites amuse themselves with forms and controversies, and worldly men pursue their own projects, Jesus still communes with his disciples, and orders all things in subservience to his own glory and their salvation.

## CHAPTER XII.

V. 12—19. M. 21.1—9. Mk. 11.1—10. L. 19.29—40.

§ 110. Ver. 1—11. *Christ anointed by Mary.*

Jesus came from the country, six days before the passover, to Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. His friends made him a supper. With the Jews ordinarily that was the best meal. Martha did not think it below her to serve when Christ sat at meat; nor should we think it dishonour or disparagement to us, to stoop to any service whereby Christ may be honoured. Christ had formerly reproved Martha for

being troubled with much serving. But she did not therefore leave off serving, as some, who when reproved for one extreme, peevishly run into another; no, still she served; but not as then at a distance, but within hearing of Christ's gracious words. Lazarus sat at meat, as a monument of the miracles Christ had wrought. Those whom Christ has raised up to spiritual life, are made to sit together with him.

Mary showed him particular respect, anointing his feet with very costly ointment; and, as a further token of her reverence, she wiped them with her hair. This was noticed by all present, for the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Doubtless, she intended this as a token of love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family. Her love to Christ was,

1. A generous love. Those who love Christ truly, love him so much better than this world, as to be willing to lay out the best they have for him. 2. A condescending love; she not only bestowed her ointment upon Christ, but poured it upon him with her own hands; nay, she did not, as usual, anoint his head, but his feet. True love does not spare pains in honouring Christ. 3. A believing love; faith was working by this love; faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed; who, being both Priest and King, was anointed as Aaron and David were. God's Anointed should be our Anointed. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows? Let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections above all competitors.

Judas, though an apostle, a preacher of the gospel, checked this pious affection and devotion. It is sad to see the life of religion and holy zeal frowned upon and discountenanced by such as are bound by their office to assist and encourage it. But this was he that should betray Christ. Coldness of love to Christ, and secret contempt of serious piety, are sad presages of final apostasy. Hypocrites, by lesser instances of worldliness, discover themselves to be ready for closing with greater temptations.

Here is a foul iniquity gilded over with a specious and plausible pretence. Here is worldly wisdom passing censure upon pious zeal, as guilty of imprudence and mismanagement. Here is charity to the poor made a colour for opposing piety

to Christ, and secretly made a cloak for covetousness. Judas asked, Why was it not given to the poor? To which it is easy to answer, Because it was better bestowed upon the Lord Jesus. We must not conclude that those do no acceptable piece of service, who do it not in our way. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, by the direction of Him who searches the heart. This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief. He had no compassion toward the poor, no concern for them. This ointment being designed for his master, he would rather have had the value in money, to be put in the common stock he was intrusted with. Observe,

Jesus and his disciples had little to live upon. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all in common: let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, deaden us to punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean way of living, if that be our lot. It was our Master's lot; for our sakes he became poor.

It was not Peter or John that was made steward, though it was a place of trust and profit, but Judas, the meanest of them. Secular employments, as they are a diversion, so they are a diminution, to a minister of the gospel; see 1 Cor. 6. 4. Judas was desirous of the place, and strong inclinations to sin within, are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. He was a thief, he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is heart-theft, as much as anger and revenge are heart-murder. Those to whom the management and disposal of public money is committed, need to be governed by steady principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his master. The less men are disposed to suspect and call us to account in such matters, the more scrupulous we should be in our conduct.

Christ would not have any censured or discouraged, who sincerely design to please him. He puts a favourable construction upon what Mary did; Against the day of my burying she has kept this. Providence often so opens a door of opportunity to good christians, and the Spirit of grace so opens their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more seasonable, than they themselves had ex-

pected. The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon pious words and actions, makes the best of what is amiss, and the most of what is good. He answers the objection of Judas. It is so ordered in the kingdom of providence, that we have always with us some or other that are proper objects of charity, Deut. 15. 11; such there will be as long as there are so much folly and so much affliction in this fallen state of mankind. It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace, that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ. We need wisdom, when two duties come in competition, to know which to prefer, and this must be determined by the circumstances. Opportunities are to be improved, and those first and most vigorously, which are likely to be of the shortest continuance.

The undeniable miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus led many, from different motives, to resort to Bethany; and it is not surprising that many should have been convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and that the scribes and pharisees were wicked in opposing him. But that the latter should consult to prevent the further effect of the miracle by putting Lazarus to death, is such a compound of wickedness, malice, folly, and infidelity as cannot be explained, except by acquaintance with the desperate enmity of the human heart against God. They resolved that the man should die whom the Lord had raised to life! The success of the gospel often so enrages wicked men, that they speak and act as if they really hoped to obtain a victory over the Almighty himself!

1. Jesus had retired from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in consequence of the designs formed against him by the priests and pharisees after he raised Lazarus. When the passover drew nigh, he returned to Bethany. *Greswell* considers that Martha was probably married to Simon, who had formerly been a leper, and that the whole family left Bethany for a short time after the resurrection of Lazarus, retiring to their native village in Galilee, where by the Jewish laws, Martha might possess property, or a house of her own. He thinks they there waited the arrival of Jesus when on his last circuit in that country, and after entertaining him there, Luke x. 38, she might have returned with him to Bethany. This reconciles the statements of Matthew and Mark with that of John, and clears up some smaller difficulties. It is not a point of essential importance, but the details entered into by *Greswell* show the care with which every point of apparent discrepancy in the gospel narrative has been examined. This anointing, it is generally admitted, only took place once, on the arrival of Jesus at Bethany, six days before the passover

and was the occasion of exciting the malevolent spirit of Judas to such a degree, that he betrayed his master. The unguent was worth about ten pounds English money, or nearly twenty shillings an ounce. From ancient Greek writers this unguent appears sometimes to have been still more highly valued.

§ 111. Ver. 12—19. *Christ enters Jerusalem.*

Christ's riding in triumph to Jerusalem is recorded by all the evangelists. We may further observe here, that the testimony of those present when Lazarus was called from the grave, excited the multitudes, both of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the strangers, to go forth and meet Jesus. His disciples had no part in it; they did not understand the meaning of his entering Jerusalem in this manner till after his ascension and the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost, by whose influence they recollected the words of the prophet, Zech. 9. 9, and perceived their accomplishment. There are many excellent things, both in the word and providence of God, which the disciples themselves do not understand at their first acquaintance with the things of God. That which afterwards is clear, at first was dark and doubtful. It is the right understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which prevents our misinterpreting and misapplying the scriptures which speak of it. The disciples of Christ are enabled to understand the scriptures by the same Spirit that indited them. But the pharisees were greatly enraged. The honour shown to Jesus by the multitude after their late edict, made them apprehend entire ruin of their authority if he were let alone any longer. While they were more desirous to apprehend Jesus, they were more afraid to attempt it. This made them welcome the treachery of Judas.

They owned they had gained no ground against him. Those who oppose Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceive they prevail nothing; God will accomplish his own purposes. But they excite one another to vigorous measures against Christ. Thus the enemies of religion are more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its friends be disheartened by every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous, and will at last be victorious?

§ 111. Ver. 20—26. *Greeks apply to see Jesus.*

These Greeks seem to have been Gentiles, at most proselytes who joined in the Jewish worship. It is supposed they

were from the confines of Galilee, and thus had acquaintance with Philip; and applied to him for an opportunity to see and hear Jesus. Philip seems to have thought it would have been objectionable to the Jews, and therefore consulted his fellow-disciples. Now they had come to worship at the feast, they wished to see Jesus. In attendance upon holy ordinances, particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as ours, to keep up communion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss our end in coming if we do not see Jesus.

Probably what follows was spoken in their presence. Our Lord showed that the time was at hand when he should be glorified as the Saviour and King, both of Jews and Gentiles, yet this would not take place till he had laid down his life for them. The hour is come, when the Son of man shall be glorified, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and in order to that he must be rejected of the Jews. The calling of the Gentiles magnified the Redeemer. A corn of wheat yields no increase unless it be cast in the ground, and there perish, as to its former shape and substance, but by that process a blade springs up which produces many grains of the same nature as that which is sown. Thus Christ might have possessed his heavenly glory, alone, without becoming incarnate; or after he had taken man's nature he might have entered heaven alone, by his own perfect righteousness, without suffering or death, but then no sinner of the human race could have been saved. His love therefore made him voluntarily submit to death. Observe particularly how Christ's humiliation is here illustrated. He fell to the ground in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but that was not all, he died, this immortal Seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their Root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is owing to the dying of this Corn of wheat. And his

disciples were to have the same mind, not loving this present life when it would endanger their souls, but even, as it were, hating it that they might secure eternal life.

He declares the work and appoints the wages. The first is easy and reasonable, the second most liberal and bountiful. Such was the love of Christ, that he might return to glory, followed by an innumerable multitude of those whom he had redeemed unto God with his blood. While we admire the love of the Redeemer, let us inquire whether our conduct and character prove us to be of the increase of this Corn of wheat? Let us examine whether Christ be in us the hope of glory; let us beg him to make us indifferent to the trifling concerns of this life, that we may serve the Lord Jesus with a willing mind, and follow his holy example, assured that such will be honoured of the Father before all his holy angels, however lightly esteemed of men.

The Greeks desired to see Jesus; but Christ lets them know it was not enough to see him—they must serve him. He saith this to encourage those who inquired after him, to become his servants.

26. *Lightfoot* shows that it was common, not only for proselytes, but even for heathens, to send or offer sacrifices at the temple. *Josephus* speaks of a refusal respecting such an offering sent by the Roman emperor, as one cause of the last fatal war.

§ 111. Ver. 27-33. *A voice from heaven bears testimony to Christ.*

Observe, 1. Christ's dread of his approaching sufferings. Now his agony began, his soul began to be exceeding sorrowful. The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy. Christ was now troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear; but it would not be so always, it would not be so long. The same is the comfort of christians in their troubles; they are but for a moment, and will be turned into joy.

2. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them. Between these two he here pauses with What shall I say? And there was none to help. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation. The more entirely the Lord of glory emptied

himself, the brighter is the proof of his love to us. Thus he was in all points tempted like as we are, to encourage us to look to him.

3. Christ was voluntary in his sufferings, yet prayed to be saved from them. Prayer against trouble may very well consist with patience under it, and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering, this hour, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand, hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering drew near.

4. For this cause came I to this hour; He does not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, but satisfies himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement. Should he now decline suffering, it would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the Divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which it behoved him thus to submit and suffer. This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our lives.

5. Father, glorify thy name, is to the same purport with, Father, thy will be done, for God's will is for his own glory. This speaks more than bare submission to the will of God—it is consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was spoken by him as our Surety, who had undertaken to satisfy Divine justice for our sin. We never could be able to make satisfaction for the wrong done, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained, but our utter ruin. Here therefore our Lord Jesus interposed, undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation. Father, let thy justice be honoured upon the Sacrifice, not upon the sinner.

Upon this the voice of the Father from heaven, which had attested him to be his beloved Son, at his baptism and when he was transfigured, was heard proclaiming that He had both glorified his name, and would glorify it. The life, doctrine, and miracles of our Lord had shown the glory of God; his death, resurrection, and exaltation would display it still more. Some supposed an angel spoke this; others, who heard the voice less distinctly, said that it thundered; but none of them were willing to admit the proof of Christ's Divine mission, though so plain.

Observe the account which our Saviour himself gives of this voice. The promises

and supports granted to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, were intended for our sakes. For our sakes he sanctified himself and comforted himself. He knew the meaning of it.

1. That by the death of Christ, Satan should be conquered. He speaks with a Divine exultation and triumph. Now the year of my redeemed is come, and the time prefixed for the breaking of the serpent's head; now, now, that great work is to be done, which has been so long thought of in the Divine counsels, so long recorded in the written word, which has been so much the hope of saints, and the dread of devils. Now is the judgment of the world; the crisis of this world, upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or death; all not recovered by this, will be helpless and hopeless. Now is the prince of this world cast out. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer. Christ, reducing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The bruising of his heel was the breaking of the serpent's head.

2. By the death of Christ souls shall be converted; If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul. (1.) It is Christ that draws; I will draw. It is sometimes ascribed to the Father, ch. 6. 44, but here to the Son, who is the arm of the Lord. He does not drive by force, Hos. 11. 4, Jer. 31. 3; the soul is made willing, but in a day of power. (2.) It is in Christ that we are drawn. The soul that was at a distance from Christ, is brought to love him and trust him. Christ was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither. He accomplished his design by being lifted up from the earth. What he meant by that we are told, ver. 33, This he spake, signifying by what death he should die,—the death of the cross, though they had designed and attempted to stone him. Christ's drawing all men unto him, followed his being lifted up from the earth. There is powerful virtue and efficacy in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. It refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which drew those to it that were stung with fiery serpents. As soon as it was known that there was heal-

ing virtue in it, what flocking was there to it! So there was to Christ, when salvation through him was preached, not to the Jews only, but to all nations, in consequence of that atonement, and by its influence, through the preached gospel and the power of the Holy Ghost.

We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with scripture-arguments, by putting things asunder which God in his word has put together; opposing one truth, under pretence of supporting another. We have heard from the gospel, that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty; we must cordially embrace both, and not separate them, or set them at variance.

27. "What shall I say? [Shall I say] Father, deliver me from this hour? But for this cause came I, for this hour, that is, to meet this hour."

28. Thus the third time, by a witness and voice from heaven, was the Messiah honoured. 1. When he entered on his public ministry, as the High Priest of our profession, at his baptism, Matt. 3. 17. 2. When a command to hear him, as the great Prophet of his church, was given at his transfiguration, Matt. 17. 5; and now when he had made his public entry into Jerusalem as a King.—*Lightfoot.*

29. The bath-kol, or voice from heaven, was one of the most ancient tokens of the manifestation of God's presence, and is repeatedly mentioned in scripture. It was usually accompanied by thunder. The Jews, who knew these revelations had often been made, observed that an angel spoke; the Greeks, unacquainted therewith, said it thundered.

§ 111. Ver. 34—36. *Christ's discourse with the people.*

The people understood our Lord to mean that he should be cut off by some violent death, and they observed that the scriptures had represented their Messiah as a glorious prince who should reign for ever. They could not reconcile these things, and desired to know who the Son of man was. Was he the Messiah or not? Thus they drew false inferences from the scriptures, because they overlooked the prophecies that spake of his sufferings and death. Had they properly considered these, they must have believed that his glory should follow, as other places foretold he should reign for ever.

Our Lord warned them that the Light would not long continue with them, and exhorted them to walk in it before the darkness overtook them. The light of Divine truth was soon after withdrawn from the unbelieving Jews, and they have, ever since, wandered in darkness. Thus all unbelievers walk in ignorance, error, and uncertainty. They die in distracting appre-



hensions, or are bolstered up by presumptuous defusions. Then darkness comes, that is, such utter incapacity to make sure the great salvation, as renders the state of the careless sinner quite deplorable; if his work then be undone, it is likely to be undone for ever. Those who would walk in the light must believe in it, and follow Christ's directions. Having thus spoken, our Lord retired from his persecutors.

We may observe here, 1. The concern Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire for their welfare. With what tenderness does he here admonish those to look well to themselves, who were contriving ill against him! Even when he endured the contradiction of sinners, he endeavoured their conversion. 2. The method he takes with these objectors; with meekness instructing those that opposed themselves, 2 Tim. 2. 25. Were men's consciences awakened with due concern about their everlasting state, and did they consider how little time they have to spend, and none to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts and time in trifling cavils. But those who have not faith, cannot behold what is set forth in Jesus lifted up on the cross, and must be strangers to its attractive influence as discovered by the Holy Spirit; they find a thousand objections in excuse for their unbelief.

34. Or rather, "What sort of a Son of man is that to be?" Our Lord only replies indirectly, adverting to their opportunity to obtain light to dissipate the clouds of their spiritual errors respecting the Messiah, which they must use while they have it.—*Bloomfield.*

§ 111. Ver. 37—43. *The unbelief of the Jews.*

The obstinate unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the miracles of Christ, was the accomplishment of a prophecy, Is. 53. 1. In respect to the few that believed, the power of the Lord would be displayed, to bring them to believe in their spiritual Redeemer. As none can claim this Divine power to take away the iniquity and obstinacy of their hearts, and as none desire it when left to themselves, so the Jews of that generation did every thing that could be conceived, to provoke God to give them up to their own hearts' lusts. The prophecy was not the motive or cause of their wickedness, but it was the declaration of God's purpose, which could not be defeated; therefore while this prophecy stood in scripture against them and against others of like

character, who hated the truth from the love of sin, the event became certain, in which sense, it is said, they could not believe.

Observe the method of conversion implied here, 1. Sinners are brought to see with their eyes, to discern the reality of Divine things, and to have some knowledge of them. 2. To understand with their heart, to apply these things to themselves; not only to assent and approve, but to consent and accept. 3. To be converted, and effectually turned from sin to Christ, from the world and the flesh to God, as their Felicity and Portion. 4. God will heal them, will justify and sanctify them; will pardon their sins, which are as bleeding wounds, and mortify their corruptions, which are as lurking diseases. When God denies his grace, nothing of this is done; the alienation of the mind from, and its aversion to God and the Divine life, grows into a rooted and invincible antipathy, the case becomes desperate.

The evangelist refers, ver. 41, to that vision which Isaiah had of the glory of Jehovah, Isa. 6. 1. He declares that the prophet then saw the glory of Christ and spake of Him, from which it is evident that Jesus is Jehovah.

While men indulge proud and infidel prejudices, rebelling against the light of God's word, and of their own consciences, and quenching the motions of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus leaves them to themselves to reject his salvation. Every man, therefore, should be peculiarly careful not to stifle his convictions, from regard to the friendship of this world, or from fear of its censures. That is not true faith which does not induce its possessors openly to confess Christ. Many members of the sanhedrim secretly believed Jesus was the Messiah, but they could not safely acknowledge him. Thus they suffered the enemies of Jesus to proceed.

See the power of the word in the convictions many were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. See the power of the world in smothering these convictions, from regard to the applause or censure of men. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion, and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that

which is evil, will make a man an apostate, when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it. See Rom. 2. 29.

§ 111. Ver. 44—50. *Christ's address to the Jews.*

This seems to have been one of our Lord's last addresses to the Jews before he finally left the temple. He publicly proclaimed that every one who believed on him, as his true disciple, did not believe on him only, but on the Father who sent him. In his holy character the moral perfections of God were displayed, and his undertaking for the salvation of men would be a most glorious manifestation of the justice, holiness, truth, and mercy of God. It is still the same as to the discovery of the Divine character in Christ by the gospel, and it will continue the same to the end. Others had been enlightened after they came into the world, and so shone with reflected light, but Christ was the Light of heaven, and came into this dark world to enlighten it by his doctrine, and no believer in him would remain in his natural darkness. Wicked men hated this light, and would not hear and believe his instructions, but for the present he did not intend to judge or take vengeance on them; he was in the character of a gracious Saviour rather than that of a Judge. Yet unbelievers would not always escape; the words of grace and truth which he then spake, would at the last day rise up in judgment against them. The words he had spoken were of the Father, and were of truth and purity, also of abundant mercy and grace; they contained the only and the effectual way by which sinners might obtain eternal life. If they rejected him and his words, they did it at their peril. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an unfeigned belief of every word of Christ, and entire subjection of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.

Beholding in Jesus the glory of the Father, we learn to obey, love, and confide in him. By daily looking to Him, who came a Light into the world, we are more and more freed from the darkness of ignorance, error, sin, and misery; we learn that the command of God, our Saviour, is everlasting life, and come to enjoy the earnest and foretastes of his blessed inheritance. But the same word will seal the condemnation of all who despise it.

47. "I came, not to judge (or rather to con-

demn) the world." Our Lord is here speaking of his gracious offers of salvation, and the passage is not opposed to ch. 9. 39, where our Lord is not speaking of the last judgment, but that the tenour of his discourse was to enable his hearers to determine whether they were ignorant or not.—See T. H. Horne.

## CHAPTER XIII.

§ 123. Ver. 1—17. *Christ washes the disciples' feet.*

Four reasons are here intimated why Christ washed his disciples' feet.

I. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might give a proof of the great love wherewith he loved them to the end. Our Lord Jesus has a people in the world that are his own; his own—he has purchased them, and paid dear for them, and he has set them apart for himself; his own—they devote themselves to him as a peculiar people. Those whom Christ loves he loves to the end; he is constant in his love to his people. Nothing can separate a believer from the love of Christ.

Christ here manifested his love to them by washing their feet. Thus he would show, that as his love to them was constant, so it was condescending; that in prosecution of the designs of it he was willing to humble himself; and that the glories of his exalted state, which he was now entering upon, should be no obstruction to the favours he bore to his chosen. He chose this time to do it,

1. Because now he knew that his hour was come, which he had long expected, when he should depart out of this world to the Father. As Christ himself, so all believers, by their union with him, when they depart out of the world, are absent from the body, go to the Father, are present with the Lord. It is a departure out of the world, this unkind, injurious world; this faithless, treacherous world; this world of labour, toil, and temptation; this vale of tears; it is going to the Father, and enjoying him as ours.

His hour was come. It is sometimes called his enemies' hour, Luke 22. 53, the hour of their triumph; sometimes His hour, the hour of his triumph. Christ knew from the beginning that it would come, and when. We know not when our hour will come, therefore what we have to do in habitual preparation for it ought never to be undone.

2. Because the devil had now put it into the heart of Judas to betray him. These words trace the treason of Judas to

its original. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts, and by what methods he darts in his suggestions, and mingles them undiscerned with those thoughts which are the natives of the heart, we cannot tell. But there are some sins in their own nature so exceeding sinful, and to which there is so little temptation from the world and the flesh, that it is plain they are directly from Satan. Christ would hereby show, he did not design to cast off all the disciples though there was a Judas among them, and he knew it.

II. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might show how lowly and condescending he was, ver. 3—5. Glorious things are here said of Christ as Mediator. 1. The Father gave all things into his hands; had given him power over all, as Possessor of heaven and earth, pursuant to the great designs of his undertaking. 2. He came from God; this implies he was in the beginning with God, and had a being and glory, before the world was. He came from God as the Son of God, and as sent by God. 3. He went to God, to be glorified with him, with the glory he had with God from eternity. That which comes from God, shall go to God; they that are born from heaven, are bound for heaven. 4. He knew all this; he had a full view of all the honours of his exalted state, and yet stooped thus low.

Here is the voluntary abasement of our Lord Jesus to wash his disciples' feet; though he was fully conscious of his personal dignity, his mediatorial authority, the approach of his ascension, and exaltation to the Father. 1. The action itself was that in which servants of the lowest rank were employed. Thus he would teach us to think nothing below us, wherein we may be serviceable to God's glory, and the good of our brethren. 2. The condescension was so much the greater that he did this for his own disciples. They were his scholars, his servants, and such as should have washed his feet, whose dependence was upon him, and their expectations from him. 3. He rose from supper to do it; or, supper being prepared. Christ would not leave his preaching, to oblige his nearest relations, Mark 3. 33, but would leave his supper, to show his love to his disciples. 4. He put himself into the garb of a servant; to do it; he laid aside his loose and upper garments, that he might apply himself to this service. We must address our-

selves to duty; we must divest ourselves of every thing that would hinder us in what we have to do. 5. He went through all the service distinctly, and passed by none of them; did it himself alone.

The whole represented his laying aside the robes of light and majesty, his assuming our nature, appearing in the form of a servant, and his self-abasement, obedience, sufferings, and death. He poured out his blood, poured out his soul unto death, and thereby prepared a laver to wash us from our sins, Rev. 1. 5.

III. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might signify to them spiritual washing, and the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin. This is intimated in his discourse with Peter upon it, ver. 6—11. In which we may observe,

1. The surprise Peter was in, when he saw his master go about this mean service, ver. 6. Christ's condescensions, especially his condescensions to us, wherein we find ourselves noticed by his grace, are justly the matter of our admiration.

2. The immediate satisfaction Christ gave to this question of surprise, was sufficient to silence his objections, ver. 7. What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter. Our Lord Jesus does many things of which even his own disciples do not for the present know the meaning, but they shall know afterward. Subsequent providences explain preceding ones; and we see afterward what was the kind tendency of events which seemed most cross. We must let Christ take his own way, both in ordinances and providences, we shall find in the issue it was the best way.

3. Peter refused to let Christ wash his feet. Here was a show of humility and modesty. Peter, no doubt, had great respect for his Master. Thus many are beguiled of their reward in voluntary humility, Col. 2. 18, 23. Such self-denial Christ neither appoints, nor accepts; for under this show of humility there was real contradiction to Christ's will. I will wash thy feet, said Christ; But thou never shalt, said Peter; so making himself wiser than Christ. It is not humility, but unbelief, to put away the offers of the gospel, as if too rich to be made to us, or too good news to be true.

4. Christ gives a reason to Peter, why he should accept it; If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. This is a declaration of the necessity for spiritual

washing. If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me, no interest in me, no communion with me, no benefit by me. All those, and those only, who are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ. To have a part in Christ, or with Christ, has all the happiness of a christian bound up in it; is to be partakers of Christ, Heb. 3. 14, to share in the inestimable privileges which result from union with him, and relation to him. It is that good part, to have which is the one thing needful. All whom Christ owns and saves, he justifies and sanctifies. We cannot partake his glory, if we partake not his merit and righteousness, his Spirit and grace.

5. Peter more than submits, he earnestly requests to be washed by Christ. Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was altered. Let us be cautious in taking up a purpose we resolve to be tenacious of. Good men, when they see their error, will recant it. How unfortunate Peter is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the universal influence of it, even upon his hands and head! Lord, that I may not be cut off from thee, make me fit for thee, by the washing of regeneration. Those who truly desire to be sanctified, desire to be sanctified throughout, to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers, purified, 1 Thess. 5. 23. Surely it must be the grossest ignorance and pride to refuse spiritual washing away of sin, without which we cannot be his disciples.

6. Christ further explains this sign, as it represented spiritual washing. But no outward washing can be more than a sign, or means of the blessing proposed to us. See here what is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state; they are washed by Christ, and are clean every whit. The evidence of a justified state may be clouded, and its comfort suspended, when yet the charter is not vacated or taken away. The true believer is thus washed when he first receives Christ for his salvation. His sins are pardoned, the sanctification of the Spirit pervades all his powers, affections, and conduct. He is graciously considered as clean, wholly, or every whit, yet by his intercourse with this evil world, he is liable anew to contract guilt and defilement. See then what ought to be the daily care of those

who through grace are in a justified state, and that is, to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from the guilt they contract daily, through infirmity and inadvertency, by the renewed exercise of repentance, with a believing application of the virtue of Christ's blood. We must also wash our feet by constant watchfulness against every thing defiling, for we must cleanse our way, and cleanse our feet; by taking heed thereto, Ps. 119. 9. The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but the more cautious; I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them! From yesterday's pardon, we should fetch an argument against this day's temptation.

Christ washed his disciples himself, and then said, Ye are clean; but he excepted Judas, not all; they were all baptized, even Judas, yet not all clean; many have the sign, that have not the thing signified. The Lord knows them that are his, and them that are not, 2 Tim. 2. 19. When hypocrites are discovered, it should be no surprise or cause of stumbling to us.

IV. Christ washed his disciples' feet, to set before us an example. This explanation he gave of what he had done, when he had done it, ver. 12-17. Before he explained it he asked them, Know ye what I have done to you? to make them sensible of their ignorance, and their need to be instructed. Observe what he grounds that which he had to say upon. He that is our Redeemer and Saviour is, in order to that, our Lord and Master. Our calling Christ Master and Lord, is an obligation upon us to receive and observe the instructions he gives us.

Observe the lesson Christ here taught; Ye also ought to wash one another's feet, ver. 14. Doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; an instructive sign, but not sacramental. This was a parable to the eye; our Master hereby teaches us. 1. Humble condescension; we must learn of our Master to be lowly in heart, Matt. 11. 29, to walk with all lowliness; and deem nothing below us but sin. 2. Condescension to be serviceable. To wash one another's feet, is to stoop to the meanest offices of love, for the real good and benefit one of another, to consult both the credit and the comfort one of another. The duty is mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren, and afford help to our brethren. 3. Serviceableness to the sanctification one of

another. We cannot satisfy for one another's sins, but we may help to purify one another from sin. We must sorrow for the failings and follies of our brethren, much more their gross pollutions; we must faithfully reprove them, and do what we can to bring them to repentance; and we must admonish them, to prevent their falling into the mire—this is washing their feet.

All Christians are to condescend to each other in love, we must not be mercenary in the services of love, nor do them with reluctance. Whatever our Master was pleased to condescend to, in favour to us, we should much more condescend to, in conformity to him. When we see our Master serving, we cannot but see how ill it becomes us to be domineering. The pride, ambition, self-indulgence and fastidiousness of many professors form an awful contrast to this example and instruction of our Lord. Men may make a vain parade of voluntary humility, or assumed charity, but to enter into the spirit of this exhortation they must be born again and become new creatures.

Our Saviour intimates the necessity of their obedience to these instructions; If ye know these things; or, seeing ye know them, happy are ye if ye do them. Most people think, Happy are they that rise and rule; but Christ saith, Happy are they that stoop and obey. If ye know these things. This is applicable to the commands of Christ in general. Though it is a great advantage to know our duty, yet we shall come short of happiness if we do not do our duty. Knowing and doing demonstrate us of Christ's kingdom. Such alone are and will be happy, who know these things and do them. The same love which induced Christ to ransom and reconcile his disciples when enemies, still influences him; and what mercy is too large to be expected from Him who came down from heaven, and not only washed his disciples' feet, but shed his precious blood, that he might open a fountain in which to wash our souls from sin and all uncleanness? Shall we not submit to his authority, by improving the means of grace, in which he hath required us to be found if we would be cleansed from our guilt?

1, 2. Considerable difficulty has arisen on the question whether our Lord duly celebrated the Jewish passover or not. See the general note on the passover and last supper.

§ 124. Ver. 18—30. *The treachery of Judas foretold.*

Our Lord next showed his disciples that they would not be all obedient and happy. A traitor had been admitted among them, that the words David spoke as a type of him, Ps. 41. 9, might be fulfilled. One was then eating bread with him who would treat him with ingratitude and indignity, as if an animal lifted up its heel against the person feeding it. Of this he informed them before it came to pass, that they might be confirmed thereby in their belief on Him. And that they might, notwithstanding, be sure that all faithful ministers would be considered and treated, as coming from the Father and himself. These reflections excited much disquietude in our Lord's mind, and he more explicitly declared that one of them was about to betray him. He had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without any such trouble of spirit as he now discovered when he spake of the ingratitude and treachery of Judas. The falls and miscarriages of the disciples of Christ are great trouble of spirit to their Master; the sins of Christians are the grief of Christ.

By looking one upon another they discovered the trouble they were in. Peter applied through John to know who this was. The resentment of Judas on being thus detected might give Satan advantage to hurry him on with his vile designs, to his speedy and awful destruction. Satan entered into him, to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness, and a resolution to stick at nothing for obtaining them. Now Satan gained more full possession of him, had more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution. Judas understood this warning, though the others supposed that Jesus referred to some orders he had given him. He went out speedily, for it was now night, and time for him to go to the chief priests.

We are not to confine our attention to Judas. The prophecy of his treachery may be extended to all who partake of God's mercies, and requite them with ingratitude. It may be considered as fulfilled in the atheist, who denies that God takes any cognizance of the affairs of

men; in the infidel, who only acquaints himself with the scriptures with a view to undermine their authority and destroy their influence; in the hypocrite, who professes to believe the scriptures, but will not regulate himself by them; and in the apostate who turns aside from Christ, and sacrifices Him and his interests for a thing of naught. Thus mankind, supported by God's providence, "after eating bread with Him, lift up the heel against Him!"

—(61.)

Their surmises in this case discover to us for what purposes our Lord Jesus commonly directed payments to be made out of the little stock he had; and so teach us how to honour the Lord with our substance. They concluded something was to be laid out, either in works of piety; that is well bestowed, which is laid out upon those things we have need of for the maintenance of God's ordinances among us; or, in works of charity. By this it appears, that our Lord Jesus, although he lived upon alms himself, see Luke 8. 3, yet gave alms to the poor; a little out of a little. Also, that the time of a religious festival was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover, it seems to have been his custom to order something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, that should make us bountiful to the poor.

Judas went out as one weary of Christ's company, and that of his apostles; he expelled himself. Withdrawing from the communion of the faithful, is commonly the first overt act of a backslider, and the beginning of apostasy. He chose the dark night as the fittest time for such works of darkness. Those whose deeds are evil, love darkness rather than light.

19. "That I am," probably alluding to the name of God, Exod. 3. 14.

§ 124. Ver. 31—35. *Christ commands the disciples to love one another.*

The departure of Judas may be considered as beginning our Lord's last sufferings. Now he is to obtain a glorious victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and triumph over them. Now he is to work out a glorious deliverance for his people; by his death to reconcile them to God, and bring in an everlasting righteousness and happiness for them; to shed that blood which is to be an inexhaustible fountain of joys and blessings to all believers. Now he is to give a glorious example of self-denial and

patience under the cross, courage and contempt of the world, zeal for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men. Christ had been glorified in many miracles he had wrought, yet he speaks of his being glorified now in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humbled state.

The sufferings of Christ were satisfaction of God's justice, and so God the Father was glorified in them. Reparation was thereby made for the wrong done him by the sin of man. They were manifestation of his holiness and mercy. The attributes of God shine bright in creation and providence, but much more in the work of redemption. God is love, and herein he hath commended his love. And as God would be glorified by his obedience unto the death of the cross, the effect of which would be the salvation of innumerable multitudes of sinners, so God would glorify him, as the Son of man, in his human nature, by the highest possible exaltation, and the nearest possible union with himself, and this he would do very shortly. He will glorify him in himself. Either, 1. In Christ himself. He will glorify him in his own person, and not only in his kingdom among men. This supposes his speedy resurrection. A common person may be honoured after death, in his memory or posterity, but Christ was honoured in himself; the glory is his own. Or, 2. In God himself. God will glorify Christ with himself, see ch. 17. 5. He shall sit down with the Father upon his throne, Rev. 3. 21.

With this prospect before him he looked upon his disciples as his dear children, yea, as little children, helpless and exposed to manifold dangers; as such he had compassion on them. He should be very little while longer with them, and it would be in vain for them to seek the comfort of his personal presence; it would be true in their case, as in that of the Jews, though in a different sense, that they could not then follow him to the place whither he was going. We cannot now follow our Lord to his heavenly happiness, but if we truly believe in him, we shall follow him hereafter; meanwhile we must wait his time and perform his works. Before Christ left them he would give them a new commandment. The moral law commanded to love their neighbours as themselves, and this implied that love of believers to each other, of which

he spake; but this was now to be explained with new clearness, enforced by new motives, illustrated by a new example, and obeyed in a new manner. It was, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour**; now it is, **Ye shall love one another**; it is pressed in a more winning way, when thus pressed as mutual duty owing to one another. Thus it might be called a new commandment, which he especially inculcated on his disciples. They were required to love each other for Christ's sake, and according to his example, seeking what might benefit others, and promoting the cause of the gospel, as one body, animated by one soul. But this commandment still appears *new* to many professors; many seem to think that rigorous zeal for an orthodox system ought to swallow up all meekness, candour, and kindness to those who differ from them, even in the smallest particulars. Men in general notice any of Christ's words rather than these.

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. We must have love, not only show love, but have it in the root and habit; have it ready. By this it appears,

1. That Christ was very earnest that his disciples should love one another; in this they must be singular, as the way of the world is to be every one for himself.

2. That it is the true honour of Christ's disciples to excel in brotherly love. Nothing will more recommend them to the esteem and respect of others. See how powerful it was, Acts 2. 46, 47. Tertulian speaks of it as the glory of the primitive church, that the Christians were known by their affection to one another. Their adversaries noticed it, and said, See how these Christians love one another!

3. That if the followers of Christ do not love one another, they not only cast reproach upon their profession, but give cause to suspect their own sincerity. Blessed Lord! are these thy Christians, these passionate, malicious, spiteful, ill-natured people! When our brethren stand in need of help, and we have an opportunity of being serviceable to them; when they differ in opinion and practice from us, or are any ways rivals with, or provoking to us, and so we have an occasion to condescend and forgive; in such cases as this, it will be known whether we have this badge of Christ's disciples.

§ 125. Ver. 36-38. *Peter's self-confidence.*

Peter refers to what Christ had said,

Whither I go, ye cannot come. The practical instructions Christ had given them concerning brotherly love, he overlooks, but speaks of that, concerning which, Christ purposely kept them in the dark. It is a common fault to be more inquisitive concerning things secret, which belong to God only, than concerning things revealed, which belong to us and our children, more desirous to have our curiosity gratified than our consciences directed; to know what is done in heaven than what we may do to get thither. It is easy to observe, even in the converse of Christians, how soon discourse of that which is plain and edifying is dropped, and no more said to it, as though the subject were exhausted; while a matter of doubtful disputation runs into endless strife of words. Christ's answer was instructive. He did not gratify Peter by any particular account of the world he was going to, but repeated what he had said.

1. We may understand it of Peter following him to the cross; Thou hast not yet strength enough of faith and resolution to drink of my cup; and it appeared so by his cowardice when Christ was suffering. Peter, though designed for martyrdom, cannot follow Christ now, but he shall follow him hereafter.

2. Understand it of his following him to the crown. Thou art not yet ripe for heaven, nor hast finished thy work on earth. Believers must not expect to be glorified as soon as effectually called; there is a wilderness between the Red Sea and Canaan. Peter makes a daring protestation of his constancy; he spake as he thought, and, though inconsiderate, he was not insincere in this resolution. But we are apt to think we can do any thing, and take it amiss to be told we cannot do this and the other, whereas, without Christ we can do nothing. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves, whom he loves, and will hide pride from them.

Christ puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, Lord, thy grace enabling me. It is good for us to shame ourselves out of presumptuous confidence in ourselves. He plainly foretells his cowardice in the critical hour. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him, though he only in heart

designed it; but he foresaw that Peter would deny him, though he designed the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. A haughty spirit goes before a fall; and some whom the Lord loves are left to feel and to show their weakness and folly, to humble them and teach them more tenderness to their brethren, as well as more entire dependence on Christ. May we then endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to love one another with a pure heart fervently, and so to walk humbly with our God.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

§ 127. Ver. 1—3. *Christ comforts his disciples.*

In these verses, we have,

I. A general caution which Christ gives to his disciples against trouble of heart. Many things then concurred to trouble the disciples; in reference to all these, Let not your hearts be troubled. Here are three words, upon any of which the emphasis may be laid.

1. Upon the word *troubled*. Be not so troubled, as to be put into hurry and confusion; be not cast down and disquieted.

2. The word *heart*. Keep possession of your own souls, when you can keep possession of nothing else. Keep the heart with all diligence.

3. The word *your*. However others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not *you* so, for you know better; Christ's disciples, more than others, should keep their minds quiet, when every thing else is unquiet.

Here is the remedy against this trouble of mind, "Believe." Confide in the acknowledged principles; that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, powerful, and good. But if you would effectually provide against a stormy day, "believe also in me." Through Christ, we become interested in God's favour and promise, which otherwise, as sinners, we must despair of. By believing in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, our belief in God becomes a comfort; and this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, by believing in the Son as they believe in the Father. And believing in God through Jesus Christ, is an excellent means of keeping trouble from the heart; it is a remedy with a promise annexed to it.

Upon such confiding in him, it is the constant doctrine of Christ and his apos-

ties, that the everlasting happiness of men is suspended; and the devotedness and attachment He requires, must surpass love for our most valued relations and important interests, even our very lives.—(95.)

II. Here is a particular direction to trust in the promise of eternal life, ver. 2, 3. This is proposed as a sovereign cordial under all troubles of this present time.

The happiness of heaven is here represented as in a father's house; My Father's house, and his Father is our Father, to whom he was now ascending. It is his house, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, dwells in light, and inhabits eternity. It is mansions, durable dwellings. The house itself is for perpetuity. There are many mansions, for there are many sons to be brought to glory. The assurance is built on the truth of Christ's word, and on the sincerity of his affection to them.

The design of Christ's going away was to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples. He would certainly come again, to take them to that blessed place. The belief of Christ's second coming, which he has given us the assurance of, is a preservative against trouble of heart, Phil. 4. 5; Jam. 5. 8. Where he is, there they shall be also; not only there, in the same place; but there, in the same state; not only spectators of his glory, but sharers in it. This may be inferred from his going to prepare a place for us, for his preparations shall not be in vain; he will be the Finisher of that of which he is the Author or Beginner; if he have prepared the place for us, he will prepare us for it.

His death was necessary to atone for their sins, and purchase their inheritance; his resurrection would be the earnest of theirs; having prepared them for that holy inheritance, he would at death receive their souls, and at the last day raise their bodies, that so they might be for ever with him in that glorious and happy place to which he was going. This hope will never disappoint; the promise of the Lord will never deceive.

2. There is probably an allusion here to the apartments about the temple, which were very numerous: see the general notes. The word translated "mansions," signifies a place of abode.

§ 127. Ver. 4—11. *Christ comforts his disciples.*

Our Lord intimated, that after the instructions he had given them, they must surely know the place whither he was going, and the way by which they must follow him. Thomas, probably resting on



the notion of a temporal kingdom, and supposing that Jesus meant to retire for a time before he openly appeared as the Messiah, observed that, as he had not told them where he meant to go, they could not know by what way they should follow him. To this our Lord answered, declaring that he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. 1. Christ is the sinner's Way to the Father and to heaven—in his person as God manifest in the flesh; in his suretyship, his vicarious obedience, and atoning sacrifice, and his intercession as our Advocate. 2. He is the Truth, as the substance of all the typical shadows, the accomplishment of all the prophecies of a Saviour; also as the Prophet of the church, whose doctrine is the Truth, believing which sinners come by him the Way. 3. He is the Life—by whose life-giving Spirit the dead in sin are quickened, and so enabled to believe in Him as the Truth, and to come by him as the Way to the mercy-seat. Nor can any man approach God as a Father, who is not quickened by Him as the Life, and instructed by him as the Truth, to come by Him as the Way. Our Lord left the disciples to collect from this to what place he was about to remove, observing that if they had known Him, they would have known the Father also; and that the little knowledge they had of him would increase, till they more clearly saw the Father in him. In proportion as we know Jesus we know the Father also, in the only way in which he manifests himself to us. The character, doctrine, and cross of Christ form the glass in which we must contemplate the glory of the invisible God. In him God and man meet, and are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocency; but Christ is another Way to it. By Christ, as the Way, an intercourse is kept up between heaven and earth; our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us by him; this is the Way that leads to rest, the good old Way. He is true to all that trust in him, as true as truth itself. He is the Resurrection and the Life.

Philip requested some extraordinary discovery of the Father. This supposes an earnest desire of acquaintance with God as a Father. Though Philip did not mean it, yet the Holy Ghost, by his mouth, designed here to teach us, that the satisfaction and happiness of a soul consist in the vision and fruition of God. In

the knowledge of God as our Father, the soul is satisfied. Christ referred him to the discoveries already made of the Father. He reproved him for two things.

1. For not improving his acquaintance with Christ, as he might have done, to a clear and distinct knowledge of him. Many know Christ, who yet do not know what they might know of him, nor see what they should see in him. The longer we enjoy the means of knowledge and grace, the more inexcusable we are, if found defective in grace and knowledge.

2. He reproves him for his infirmity in the prayer made. Herein appears much of the weakness of Christ's disciples, that they know not what to pray for as they ought, Rom. 8. 26, but often ask amiss, Jam. 4. 3; for what either is not promised, or is already bestowed in the sense of the promise, as here.

He instructs him. All that saw Christ by faith, saw the Father in him. In the light of Christ's doctrine they saw God as the Father of lights; in Christ's miracles, they saw God as the God of power. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life, his grace in all the acts of grace Christ did. We are to believe; That Christ is in the Father, and the Father in him, as he had said, ch. 10. 30, I and my Father are one.

See here what inducements we have to believe this. First, For his word's sake. He spake not of himself only, but the mind of God according to the eternal counsels. Also, For his work's sake. We are to believe the revelation of God to man in Jesus Christ, for the sake of the works of the Redeemer; those mighty works which, by showing forth themselves, Matt. 14. 2, show forth him, and God in him. Christ's miracles are proofs of his Divine mission, not only for the conviction of infidels, but for the confirmation of the faith of his own disciples, ch. 2. 11; 5. 36; 10. 37.

10, 11. All these expressions show the oneness of nature between the Father and the Son; see note ch. 7. 16. When referring to the Persons of the Trinity, they refer, not to a moral quality, but to a oneness of power for the performance of works which imply Omnipotence.—J. P. Smith.

§ 127. Ver. 12—17. *Christ comforts his disciples.*

The proof of Christ's power as the Son of the Father, would be enforced by the powers to be conferred on the disciples and on other believers. They would be enabled in his name to perform similar works, nay, in some respects still greater.

This refers to the miracles wrought by the apostles after the day of Pentecost, and it would be the effect of his ascension to the Father, and his intercession for them in heaven. Whatsoever they should ask in his name, for these important ends, He would bestow upon them by his own power and authority, that the Father might be glorified in the honour conferred on the Son, in the effects of the gospel, and the display of his justice, mercy, wisdom, truth, and power, in that way of saving sinners. Whatsoever we ask in Christ's name, that shall be for our good, and suitable to our state, he shall give it to us; that in renewal of our souls unto holiness, steady resistance of temptation, obedience under trials, and conversion of sinners through our instrumentality, the Father may be glorified in the Son.

To ask in Christ's name, is, to plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. Old testament saints had regard to this when they prayed for the Lord's sake, Dan. 9. 17, and for the sake of the Anointed, Ps. 84. 9; but Christ's mediation is brought to a clearer light by the gospel, so we are enabled more expressly to ask in his name. Thus we aim at his glory and honour, as our highest end, in all our prayers.

Jesus next reminded the disciples that they ought to show their love to Him, by diligent obedience to his commandments. While they regarded his authority and glory on earth, he would attend to their interests in heaven, he would intercede with the Father for them, and obtain for them another Comforter. When Christ saith, I will pray the Father, it does not suppose that the Father is unwilling, or must be importuned to it, but only that the gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, purchased by his merit, and procured by his intercession. The word used here, signifies an advocate, counselor, monitor, and comforter. He would abide with them to the end of time, his gifts and graces would encourage their hearts. The expressions used here and elsewhere, evidently denote personality, and the office itself implies all the Divine perfections. This other Comforter would be sent by the Father, and through the Son, who is one with the Father—thus the Trinity of Persons is plainly declared in this and other similar passages—each Person distinct and Divine, yet but One God. This Comforter is called the Spirit

of truth, being truth, the Revealer of all Divine truth, as the source of inspiration, and the great Teacher of truth in the hearts of believers. But the world receives him not as such, for all his instructions and influences are contrary to its pursuits and maxims. The disciples, being born of God, were acquainted with these blessed influences and the Divine Author of them. He even then was present with them. The gift of the Holy Ghost is a peculiar gift, bestowed upon the disciples of Christ in a distinguishing way; upon them, and not on the world. This is the favour God bears to his chosen; it is the heritage of those that fear his name.

Though we never have been favoured with the Redeemer's personal presence, yet we may hope for that of the Holy Spirit. As the source of holiness and happiness he will abide with every believer for ever. Nor may the believer deny his obligations to him, and dependence on him, from whose gracious influences all his joys and hopes arise, who will for ever be in them that love Jesus and keep his commandments.

16. The several parts of the office of the Holy Ghost are, to intercede as an Advocate, to instruct as a Monitor, and to comfort as a Comforter. All these three are signified by the word Paraclete, by which the Holy Ghost is best expressed.—*Valpy.*

Another Comforter, or "Paraclete." This name is used not only of a person called in to plead another's cause, but of one who is a helper in any matter, or generally a patron. *Lampe* and others See *Bloomfield*.

§ 127. Ver. 18—24. *Christ comforts his disciples.*

Christ promises that he would continue his care of his disciples. I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless, for though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, I will come to you. The case of true believers, though sometimes it may be sorrowful, yet never is comfortless, because they are never orphans: for God is their Father, who is an everlasting Father. I do come; that is, I will come speedily to you at my resurrection, I will not be long away, but will be with you again in a little time. I will come daily to you in my Spirit; in the tokens of his love, and visits of his grace, I will come certainly at the end of time. Surely I will come quickly, to introduce you into the joy of your Lord.

He promises that they should continue their acquaintance with him and interest in him. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith, shall see him for ever;

the world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence.

They grieved that their Master was dying, and counted upon dying with him. No, saith Christ, I live. We are not comfortless, while we know that our Redeemer lives. Therefore ye shall live also. The life of christians is bound up in the life of Christ; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God: if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall live eternally; their bodies shall rise in virtue of Christ's resurrection.

Ye shall have the assurance of this. When I am glorified, when the Spirit is poured out, ye shall know more clearly and certainly than ye do now, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. These glorious mysteries will be fully known in heaven. They were more fully known after the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles. They are known by all that receive the Spirit of truth, to their abundant satisfaction, for in this knowledge is founded their fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Union with Christ is the life of believers; and their relation to him, and to God through him, is their happiness. The knowledge of this union is their unspeakable joy and satisfaction; Christ speaks of it as a further act of grace, that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. An interest in Christ and the knowledge of it are sometimes separated.

He promises that he would love them, and manifest himself to them. By this Christ shows that the kind things he here said to his disciples, were intended not for those only who were now his followers, but for all that should believe in him through their word. Here is, the duty of disciples; having Christ's commands, we must keep them. Having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives. Disciples are looked upon by Christ to be such as love him, and keep his commandments. The surest evidence of our love to Christ is obedience to the laws of Christ.

They shall have the Father's love. We could not love God, if he did not first, out of his good will to us, give us his grace to love him. God so loves the Son, as to love all those that love him. They shall have Christ's love. In the nature of God, nothing shines more bright than this, that God is love. And in the undertaking of

Christ, nothing appears more glorious than this, that he loved us. He bears believers on his heart, and ever lives, interceding for them. They shall have the comfort of that love. There is a spiritual manifestation of Christ and his love made to all believers; when he enlightens their minds to know his love, Eph. 3. 18, 19, enlivens their graces, and draws them into exercise, and thus enlarges their comforts in himself. When he clears up the evidences of their interest in him, and gives them tokens of his love, experience of his tenderness, and earnestness of his glory, then he manifests himself to them.

Judas, not Iscariot, expresses his surprise at Christ's promise. The evangelist carefully distinguishes between them. Take heed of mistaking; let us not confound the precious and the vile.

He expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. How then, thinks he, should it be confined to us only? We create difficulties to ourselves by mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world. Christ's manifesting himself to his disciples, is justly marvellous in our eyes; for it must be resolved into free and sovereign grace.

Christ further explains the condition of the promise, which was loving him, and keeping his commandments. As to this, he shows what an inseparable connexion there is between love and obedience; love is the root, obedience is the fruit. Where sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience. Love will be a commanding, constraining principle in him, and where love is, duty follows of course, from a principle of gratitude. On the other hand, where there is no true love to Christ, there will be no care to obey him. He further explains the promise. Jude wondered Christ should manifest himself to them; but this answers it, My Father will love him.

We will come unto him, and make our abode with him, I and the Father, who in this are one. Not only, I will show myself to him at a distance, but, We will come to be near him, to be with him; such are the powerful influences of Divine graces and comforts upon the souls of those that love Christ in sincerity. Not only I will give him a transient view of me, but, We will take up our abode with him. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take pleasure in

loving them, will rest in love to them. He will be with them as his home.

Christ gives a good reason both to bind us to observe the condition, and encourage us to depend upon the promise. The stress of duty is laid upon the precept of Christ as our rule, and justly, for that word of Christ which we are to keep, is the Father's word, and his will the Father's will. The stress of our comfort is laid upon the promise of Christ, even the word of the Father which sent him; which therefore every believer may rely upon. This must be peculiar to true disciples, for those who love not Jesus neither believe nor obey his words, therefore they cannot expect these discoveries of the Divine glory and grace to their souls. These privileges are confined to those whose faith worketh by love, and whose love to Jesus induces them to keep his commandments. Such are thus evidenced to be the subjects of the Father's electing love, the peculiar purchase of the incarnate Son, and partakers of the Holy Spirit's regenerating and new creating grace.

24. In this and similar passages, as ver. 24; 7. 16, 8. 28. 38; 5. 30; 14. 16, our Lord shows that in all his plans and his whole conduct as the Messiah, there was nothing in any respect separate, independent, or insulated from the authority of the Father. His own words and acts were in a sense absorbed in the will and authority of Him concerning whom he says, "My Father is greater than I," yet these declarations were combined with others inconsistent with any idea of an essential disparity; see note ver. 10, and ch. 10. 30.

§ 127. Ver. 25—27. *Christ comforteth his disciples.*

The disciples had not fully understood the truths Jesus spoke to them, but the Holy Spirit, the Author of all holiness and the Teacher of all truth, would effectually instruct them, removing all their prejudices, and assisting all their faculties to receive the truth. Though it was effected by immediate revelation, yet it was mainly done by causing them to recollect the doctrines, promises, and precepts Christ had given them, and enabling them to see the truth and glory of them. Would we know these things for our good, we must pray for, and depend on the teaching of the Holy Ghost; thus the words of Jesus will be brought to our remembrance, and many difficulties solved which are insuperable to others. To all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him, by faith and prayer, we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

Our Lord bequeathed his peace to his disciples as a legacy. This comprised peace with God, peace of conscience, serenity of mind rising from confidence in God and submission to Him, and a disposition to mutual love. This he gave them, not in that complimentary way in which the people of the world wish peace and prosperity to one another, without meaning or sincerity, nor yet in the manner in which they desire the welfare of those they cannot relieve; but he gave them his peace with Divine power, and it was a far richer legacy than any dying friend ever yet bequeathed, therefore they ought not to give way to sorrow or alarm on account of troubles which yet awaited them. I leave you, but I leave my peace with you. I not only give you a title to it, but put you in possession of it.

Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all the needful good, all that is really and truly good, all the purchased, promised good; tranquillity of mind arising from a sense of our justification before God. It is the counterpart of our pardons, and the composure of our minds. This Christ calls his peace, for he is himself our Peace, Eph. 2. 14.

Let us apply for the legacy Christ bequeathed to his disciples, even His peace, which is a peace of God that passeth all understanding. It will contribute more to our present comfort than the friendship, applause, or possession of the whole world. It will strengthen our hearts against trouble and terror in the afflictive scenes of life, and in the solemn hour of dissolution. We may know the peace of God from that of pharisees or hypocrites, by its humbling and sanctifying effects, by its enabling us to unite tenderness of conscience with trust in God's mercy, and submission to his will.

§ 127. Ver. 28—31. *Christ comforteth his disciples.*

Observe, 1. That though Christ went away, he should come again. What we hear of the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his second coming, we need to be told again and again.

2. That he went to his Father. Observe here, It is matter of joy to Christ's disciples, that he is gone to the Father. The reason of this is, because the Father is greater than he. Christ raises the thoughts and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that which they now thought all their happiness bound up in. The kingdom of the Father,

wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom. The disciples of Christ should show that they love him, by rejoicing in the glories of his exaltation, rather than by lamenting the sorrows of his humiliation.

3. That his going away, compared with the prophecies of it which went before, would be a means of confirming their faith. The things foretold were according to the Divine purpose and designation. Let them therefore not be troubled at that which would confirm their faith, and so be to their real benefit.

4. That He was sure of victory over Satan, with whom he knew he was to struggle in his departure. His time was now short, he therefore spake largely to them. When we come to be sick, and to die, probably we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; therefore what good counsel we have to give, let us give it while in health. The disciples expected their Master to be the prince of this world, and themselves worldly princes under him. But Christ tells them the prince of this world was his enemy, by whom the princes of this world were actuated and ruled. But added, He has nothing in me. Observe here,

1. The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The foresight of a temptation gives advantage in resisting it; being forewarned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we ought to be always on our guard against Satan.

2. The assurance he had of good success. There was no guilt in Christ. When Satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against him. There was no corruption in Christ to give advantage to the prince of this world in his temptations; he could not crush his undertaking by drawing him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in him, nothing for his temptations to fasten upon; such was the spotless purity of his nature, that he was above possibility of sinning. The more Satan's interest in us is crushed, and decays, with the more comfort may we anticipate sufferings and death.

As it was evidence of Christ's love to man, that he died for his salvation; so it was of his love to God, that he died for

his glory and the accomplishment of his purposes. The best evidence of our love to the Father, is, our doing as he hath commanded us. As Christ loved the Father, and obeyed him even unto the death; so we must love Christ, and obey him. To himself this would be most sharp and terrible, but the event would be most glorious. Indeed, he would not have been subjected to pain and death had it not been voluntary, that he might be glorified in the salvation of his chosen people. As this was his purpose, and the time was near, he called upon them to go forth to the place of preparation and devotion, where his enemies were about to apprehend him. In these words he gives his disciples encouragement to follow him. He says, Let us go. He calls them to no hardships but he himself goes before them as their Leader.

Let us rejoice in the Saviour's victories over the prince of this world, even Satan; and though the enemy still has a strong party in our souls, yet, depending on the Redeemer's all-sufficient grace, let us prosecute his victories, by resisting temptation and opposing the cause of sin and Satan in the world. Let us copy the example of his love and obedience; let us be ready to arise and encounter hardship and danger, and to go hence by death whenever he shall summon us away.

28. "My Father is greater than I." This declaration of our Lord is to be understood of himself, as he is man. In ver. 24 he said that the Father had sent him, that is, in his quality of Messiah—he here speaks of his human nature. This saying can thus easily be reconciled with ch. 10. 30, where he speaks of his Divine nature. The mention of a comparison shows that Christ was not a mere man.

This chapter contains a discourse of Christ, held at the table. It consists of three parts: (1.) Consolation for the impending affliction, ver. 1-4. (2.) Exhortation to faith in Christ, ver. 5-15. (3.) Promise of the Holy Spirit, ver. 16-31. The two following chapters contain another discourse of Christ while going out of the city, or in the guest chamber, after having risen from table.—See Bloomfield.

## CHAPTER XV.

§ 129. Ver. 1-8. *Christ the true Vine.*

Perhaps the fruit of the vine, of which they had been partaking, or the sight of a spreading vine, gave occasion for this illustration of the union between Christ and his disciples which had been mentioned in the preceding chapter, ver. 20.

Here Christ discourses concerning the fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, which his

disciples were to bring forth, under the similitude of a vine.

1. Jesus Christ is the Vine, the true Vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is a vine, Ps. 80. 8. He is the Vine, planted in the vineyard, planted in the earth; he is the Word made flesh. The union of the human and Divine natures in the person of Christ, and the fulness of the Spirit that is in him, resemble the root of the vine deriving fertilizing juices from a rich, well-cultivated soil. But, like the vine, the Redeemer appears to the unbeliever a mean, despicable plant, while he admires more sightly trees. He is the true Vine; not like that wild vine, which deceived those who gathered of it; 2 Kings 4. 39. Whatever excellence there is in any creature, serviceable to man, is but a shadow of that grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is the true Vine, represented by Israel's vine, under which he dwelt safely, 1 Kings 4. 25.

2. That believers are branches of this vine, which supposes that Christ is the Root of the vine. The root is unseen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree, Rom. 11. 18, diffuses sap to it, and in Christ are all supports and supplies. His mediatorial work, like the stem of the vine, conveys those supplies to believers which render them fruitful. The branches of the vine are many, yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all true christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ. Believers, like the branches of the Vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Ezek. 15. 2. As professed christians, we appear to belong to this Vine, and are united to Christ by various types; but woe be to those who have no more intimate communion than that which consists in notions, sacraments, and forms.

3. That the Father is the Husbandman—the Landworker. Though the earth is the Lord's, it yields him no fruit unless he work it. God has not only a property in the vine and all the branches, but a care of it. He hath planted, and watered, and gives the increase; for we are God's husbandry, 1 Cor. 3. 9. See Isa. 5. 1, 2; 27. 2, 3. He looked upon Christ, the Root, and made him to flourish out of a dry ground. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, so that nothing hurts them. Never was any husbandman so wise, so

watchful about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must needs prosper.

The duty taught us by this similitude is, to bring forth fruit, and, in order to that, to abide in Christ.

1. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes, and from a christian we look for a christian temper and disposition, a christian life and conversation, christian devotions, and christian designs. We must honour God, and do good; this is bearing fruit. Here is the doom of the unfruitful, ver. 2; they are taken away; unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more. It might be read, Every branch that beareth not fruit in me. They that do not bear fruit in Christ, and in his Spirit and grace, are as if they bore no fruit at all, Hos. 10. 1. They shall be taken away, in justice to them, and in kindness to the other branches. Whatever instruments or means are employed, they are separated from the true Vine. The first blessing was, Be fruitful; and it is still a great blessing.

Even fruitful branches need pruning. The best have notions, passions or humours, which should be taken away, which Christ has promised to do by his word, and Spirit, and providence. If the pruning knife be used to lop off what is amiss, if sharp means are employed to promote the sanctification of believers, when in their right mind, they will be thankful for them. They dread lest they shall be found unfruitful branches at last. And every person really united to Christ by faith, and partaking his Spirit, is pruned and tended by the great Husbandman that he may bring forth more fruit.

The benefit believers have by the doctrine of Christ, the power of which they should labour to exemplify in a fruitful conversation, is, Now ye are clean.

Their society was clean, Now Judas was expelled by the word of Christ, ch. 13. v. 27. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, and separates between the precious and the vile. They were each of them clean, that is, sanctified, by the truth of Christ; that faith by which they received the word of Christ purified their hearts. The Spirit of grace by the word refined them from the dross of the world and the flesh. Apply it to all believers. The word of Christ is spoken to them; there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works

grace, and works out corruption. We evidence that we are cleansed by the word, when we bring forth fruit unto holiness. If we bear much fruit, herein our Father will be glorified. The fruitfulness of all christians, though in a low and narrow sphere, is to the glory of God. So shall we be Christ's disciples indeed, approving ourselves so, making it to appear that we really are what we call ourselves. And the more fruit we bring forth, the more we abound in what is good, the more our Lord is glorified.

2. In order to our fruitfulness, we must abide in Christ, must have union with him by faith, and do all we do in religion through the virtue of that union. It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples, constantly to keep up dependence upon Christ, and communion with him. Those that are come to Christ, must abide in him; Abide in me, by faith; and I in you, by my Spirit. Abide in me, and fear not but I will abide in you: the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side. We must abide in Christ's word by regard thereto, and it in us as a light to our feet. We must abide in Christ's merit as our righteousness, and it in us as our support and comfort.

Abiding in Christ is that we may do much good. He that is constant in the exercise of faith in Christ and love to him; who lives upon his promises and is led by his Spirit, he bringeth forth much fruit. A life of faith in the Son of God is incomparably the most excellent life a man can live in this world; it is regular and even, pure and heavenly, it is useful and comfortable, and answers the end of life. It is necessary to our doing any good. We have as constant dependence on the grace of the Mediator for all spiritual and divine life, as upon the providence of the Creator for all actions of the natural life. Without Christ we can do nothing aright, nothing that will be fruit pleasing to God, or profitable to ourselves, 2 Cor. 3. 5. We depend on Christ, as the branch on the root, for sap.

True christians find by experience, that any interruption in the exercise of their faith, causes holy affections to decline, their corruptions to revive, and their comforts to droop. Here is a description of the fearful state of hypocrites that are not in Christ; and of apostates that abide not in Christ. They are cast forth as dry

and withered branches, which are plucked off because they cumber the tree. Those who abide not in Christ, though they may flourish for a while in a plausible profession, yet come to nothing. Their parts and gifts wither, their zeal and devotion wither, their credit and reputation wither, their hopes and comforts wither, Job 8. 11-13. Men gather them. Satan's agents and emissaries pick them up, and make an easy prey of them. Those who seduce them and draw them to sin cast them into the fire; for they make them children of hell. Fire is the fittest place for withered branches, they are good for nothing else. They are burned; that follows of course; but it is here added very emphatically, and makes the threatening very terrible. They will not be consumed in a moment, they are burning for ever in a fire, which not only cannot be quenched but will never spend itself. This comes of quitting Christ, this is the end of barren trees. Some apply men's gathering them, to the ministry of angels in the great day, when they bundle the tares for the fire.

Observe the blessed privilege those have who abide in Christ. If the word be our constant guide and monitor, if it be in us as at home, then we abide in Christ, and he in us. Our communion with Christ is maintained by prayer. Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you. Those that abide in Christ as their hearts' delight, shall have, through Christ, their hearts' desire. If we have Christ, we shall want nothing that is good for us. Let us then seek to live more simply on the fulness of Christ, and to grow more fruitful in every good word and work, so may our joy in Him and in his salvation be full.

2. "He purgeth it," that is, He pruneth it.  
6. Or, "They are gathered."

§ 129. Ver. 9-17. *Christ's love to his disciples.*

Christ, who is love itself, here discourses concerning love; a fourfold love.

¶ Concerning the Father's love to him. The Father loved him. He was the Son of his love. He loved him, and gave all things into his hand; yet so loved the world, as to deliver him up for us all. Those whom God loves as a Father, may despise the hatred of all the world. He abode in his Father's love. Because he continued to love his Father, he went cheerfully through his sufferings, and his Father continued to love him be-

cause he kept his Father's law. We having broken the law of creation, and thereby thrown ourselves out of the love of God; Christ satisfied for us by obeying the law of redemption, so he abode in his love, and restored us to it.

2. Concerning his own love to his disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy.

The proofs and products are four:

(1.) Christ loved his disciples, for he laid down his life for them, ver. 13. The highest proof of the love of the children of men to one another is, laying down one's life for a friend to save his life. Others have laid down their lives, content they should be taken from them; but Christ gave up his, was not merely passive, but made it his own act and deed. Others have thus laid down their lives for their friends, but Christ laid down his for us, when we were enemies, Rom. 5. 8. The Lord of glory was about to lay down his life in the midst of agony and ignominy for those who were undeserving of his esteem, and fit for objects of his indignation and hatred.

(2.) Christ loved his disciples, for he took them into a covenant of friendship with himself. The followers of Christ are the friends of Christ; he is graciously pleased to call and count them so. He bears with them, is afflicted in their afflictions, and takes pleasure in their prosperity. Though they often show themselves unfriendly, he is a Friend that loves at all times. Observe how endearingly this is expressed, ver. 15. He will not call them servants, though they called him Master and Lord. Those who would be like Christ in humility, must not insist upon authority and superiority. He will call them his friends; he will not only love them, but will let them know it.

(3.) Christ loved his disciples, for he was very free in communicating his mind to them; and they would soon be taught by the Holy Spirit more completely to understand his counsel. As to the secret will of God, there are many things we must be content not to know; but as to the revealed will of God, Christ has handed to us what he received of the Father. The truths relating to man's redemption, Christ declared to his disciples, that they might declare them to others.

(4.) Christ loved his disciples, for he

chose and ordained them to be the prime instruments of his glory and honour in the world, ver. 16. His love to them appeared in their election; of all that are chosen to grace and glory, it may be said, They have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen them, Deut. 7. 7, 8. Also his love appeared in their ordination. He appointed them his ministers or apostles, that they might go forth in his name into distant regions. They were ordained to be diligent in their work, and unwearied in doing good. They were ordained to be instrumental in God's hand for bringing nations into obedience to Christ, Rom. 1. 13, that the good effect of their labours may continue in the world from generation to generation, to the end of time. His love to them appeared in the interest they had at the throne of grace. Christ here shows for encouragement in prayer, that we have a God to go to, who is a Father. Whatever errand we come upon to the throne of grace, according to God's will, we may with humble boldness mention Christ's name, and plead that we are related to him, and he is concerned for us; an answer of peace is promised to us.

3. Concerning the disciples' love to Christ, enjoined in consideration of the great love wherewith he had loved them. He exhorts them to continue in his love, ver. 9, that nothing may tempt us to withdraw from him, or provoke him to withdraw from us. All that love Christ should continue in their love to him, and take all occasions to show it.

Also, to let his joy remain in them, and fill them, ver. 11. This he designed in the precepts and promises given them. If they bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, he will continue to rejoice in them as he had done. And it is the will of Christ that his disciples should constantly and continually rejoice in him, Phil. 4. 4. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, but the joy of those who abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. Observe, not only that ye may be full of joy, but that your joy in me and in my love may rise higher and higher, till it come to perfection, when ye enter into the joy of your Lord.

They are to evidence love to him by keeping his commandments, ver. 10. Observe here, the promise; Ye shall abide in my love, ye shall have grace and strength to persevere in loving me. If the same hand that first shed abroad the



love of Christ in our hearts, did not keep us in that love, we should not long abide in it. This commandment they must keep without spot, 1 Tim. 6. 14; thus they must show that they abide in his love.

To induce them to keep his commandments, he urges his own example, and the necessity of it to their interest in him, ver. 14. Those only will be accounted Christ's faithful friends, that approve themselves his obedient servants. Universal obedience to Christ is the only acceptable obedience.

4. Concerning the disciples' love one to another, enjoined as evidence of their love to Christ, and a grateful return for his love to them, ver. 12, 17. No duty of religion is more frequently inculcated, or more strongly urged, by our Lord, than that of mutual love. It is here recommended by Christ's pattern, As I have loved you. Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other. In that manner, and from that motive, we should love one another. It is required by his precept. As under the law prohibition of idolatry was the commandment more insisted on than any other, foreseeing the people would be addicted to that sin; so Christ, foreseeing how prone the christian church would be to uncharitableness, laid most stress upon this precept. He speaks as if about to give many things in charge, yet names this only; it includes many duties.

Gracious, condescending God, who is like unto thee! And dost thou indeed call such unworthy creatures as we are thy friends? Lord, help us to believe in some degree answerable to this high relation. We know to whom we may unbosom ourselves; surely no earthly friendship is so intimate, so sincere, so cordial as thine. And shall we be unfaithful to such a Friend? Forbid it, Lord, let us have no will, no interest, no affections different from thine.—(83.)

16. "Ordained," or rather "I have appointed you." The word is "put" or "placed you," that is, in the vine; in saying this our Lord still makes use of the metaphor of the vine.—A. Clarke.

§ 129. Ver. 18—25. *Hatred and persecution foretold.*

To prepare their minds for trials Christ tells his disciples to consider that the men of the world had treated him, their Master, with the greatest enmity, contempt, and cruelty, notwithstanding the excellency of his conduct. If they had been

his disciples only in name, and their principles and conduct had accorded to the maxims, fashions, and pursuits of worldly men, they would have been satisfied with them. But, as he had selected them from their former companions, and had effectually called them to preach his humbling doctrines, to copy his holy example, and to promote his cause, the same views which led the world to hate Him, would induce it to hate them also, and to persecute them as servants, as they persecuted their Lord and Master. This they would do for his name's sake. Alas! how little do many persons think, that in opposing the doctrine of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, they prove themselves ignorant of the one living and true God, whom they profess to worship. Whatever is pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel, they hate Christ's disciples, because they bear his name, and bear up his name in the world. It is the character of Christ's disciples, that they stand up for his name. The name into which they were baptized, is that which they will live and die by. It has commonly been the lot of those that appear for Christ's name, to suffer for so doing. It is comfort to the greatest sufferers, if they suffer for Christ's name sake. The world's ignorance is the true cause of its enmity to the disciples of Christ. They know not God, as Him that sent our Lord Jesus. We do not rightly know God if we do not know him in Christ; all who persecute those whom he sends, make it to appear that they know not that he was sent of God.

Christ's holy and gracious doctrine and miracles having excited the enmity of the Jews, exceedingly increased their guilt and left them without excuse. He had so manifested the Divine glory and character, that in hating him they manifested enmity to God. They fulfilled the words of David, who spake as a type of him, and was hated without a cause by the men of his generation. We are apt to justify our complaints of injuries done us, with this, that they are causeless, but the more they are so, the more they are like the sufferings of Christ, and may be the more easily borne. Thus it was with the Jews, who saw and hated the Son of God; thus it is, at this day, with many who have the scriptures in their hands, and perhaps the gospel faithfully preached—they have no cloak for their sins. The clearer and fuller the discoveries of the grace and

\* truth of Jesus Christ, the more said that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and believe in him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak that it may appear sin.

§ 129. Ver. 26, 27. *The Comforter promised.*

When the apostles saw the contempt and cruelty with which their Lord was treated, and found that they must expect the like ill usage, they might have been ready to conclude that none would attend to their doctrine. He therefore assured them, that the Comforter whom he had promised to send, would testify to him, by his miraculous operations, and by giving success to the gospel. It is here promised, that the blessed Spirit shall maintain the cause of Christ in the world, notwithstanding the opposition it should meet with. The blessed Spirit is the Emanation of Divine light, and the Energy of Divine power. The rays of the sun, by which it dispenses and diffuses light, heat, and influence, proceed from the sun, yet are one with it. They also, taught and encouraged by his influences, would bear testimony to Him and his salvation, for which they would be especially competent, having been with him from the beginning of his ministry.

Let us rejoice, that by the conversion of many sinners, and by the holy lives of many professors of the gospel, the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, still bears testimony to Christ, and confirms the declarations of the faithful ministers who preach his free and glorious salvation, after the example and doctrine of those who were with him from the beginning.

26. The Holy Spirit is here said to *proceed* from the Father. Many suppose this to refer not only to his being sent forth from the Father and the Son, (as the Son was from the Father,) a willing messenger, to apply the salvation of Christ to the hearts of his chosen people, but to what is called his *eternal procession* from the Father, by which is meant something in a measure answering to the eternal generation of the Son, yet distinct from it. But these are incomprehensible mysteries, and it is best not to attempt any explanation of such subjects, which not being clearly revealed, cannot otherwise be at all discovered or understood.—*Scott.*

## CHAPTER XVI.

§ 129. Ver. 1—6. *Persecution foretold.*

Our Lord Jesus, by giving his disciples notice of trouble, designed to take off the terror, that it might not be a surprise to them. He foretells particularly what they should suffer, 1. From ecclesiastical censures. 2. From the civil power.

You will find them really cruel; They will kill you. Christ's sheep have been accounted as sheep for the slaughter. You will find them seemingly conscientious; they will think they do God service! It is possible for those who are real enemies to God's service, to pretend zeal for it. Nay, it is common to patronise enmity to religion, with a colour of duty to God, and service to his church. This does not lessen the sin of the persecutors; villains will never be consecrated by putting the name of God to them.

Christ gives the true reason of the world's enmity and rage against them, Because they have not known the Father, or me. In vain do men pretend to know God and religion, while they slight Christ and christianity. Those are very ignorant indeed of God and Christ, who think it acceptable service to persecute others. He told them of it now. When suffering times come, it will be of use for us to remember what Christ has told us of sufferings, that our belief of Christ's foresight and faithfulness may be confirmed, and the trouble may be less grievous. As Christ in his suffering, so his followers in theirs, should look to the fulfilling of scripture. He did not tell them sooner, because he was with them to instruct, guide, and comfort them, they needed not then the promise of the Spirit's extraordinary presence.

Christ expresses very affectionate concern for the present sadness of his disciples, and that instead of inquiring after what would comfort them, they pored upon that which was melancholy, and sorrow had filled their heart.

He had told them that he was about to leave them. He was not driven away by force, but voluntarily departed; his life was not extorted from him, but laid down by him. They were careless of the means of comfort. If the disciples had pressed their inquiry, they would have found that his going away was that he might be glorified, and for their advantage; therefore their sufferings for him should not trouble them. A humble, believing inquiry into the design and tendency of the darkest dispensations of Providence, would help to reconcile us to them, and make us grieve the less, and fear the less, because of them. It will silence us to ask, Whence come they? but it will abundantly satisfy us to ask, Whither go they?—for we know they work for good,

Rom. 8. 28. The disciples were too intent, and pored too much on the occasions of their grief; Sorrow had filled their heart. Christ said enough to fill them with joy; but, by looking only at that which made against them, and overlooking that which made for them, they were full of sorrow. It is the common fault and folly of melancholy christians to dwell only on the dark side of the cloud, and to turn a deaf ear to the voice of joy and gladness. That which filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow, was too great affection for this present life. They were full of hopes of their Master's outward kingdom and glory, and that they should shine and reign with him; to hear of nothing but bonds and afflictions, filled them with sorrow. Nothing more hinders our joy in God, than the love of the world, and the sorrow of the world, the consequence of it.

§ 129. Ver. 7—15. *The promise of the Holy Spirit, and his office.*

Observe, three things concerning the Comforter.

I. That Christ's departure was absolutely necessary to the Comforter's coming. Sending the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's death, which was his going away. It was to be an answer to his intercession within the vail. The glorified Redeemer is not unmindful of his church on earth, nor will he ever leave it without necessary supports. Though he departs, he sends the Comforter; nay, he departs on purpose to send him. Thus it is still, though one generation of ministers and christians depart, another is raised up in their room, for Christ will maintain his own cause. And the presence of Christ's Spirit in his church, is so much better, and more desirable than his bodily presence, that it was really expedient for us that he should go away, to send the Comforter. His bodily presence could be only in one place at one time, but his Spirit is every where, in all places, at all times, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name.

II. That the coming of the Spirit was absolutely necessary. He will reprove, or he will convince the world, concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. See the office of the Spirit—to reprove. Ministers are reprovers by office, and by them the Spirit reproveth. Or to convince. Convincing work is the Spirit's work, he can do it effectually, and none but he. The Spirit is called the Com-

forter, and here it is said, he shall convince. It is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort. It intimates that the Spirit's comforts are solid, and grounded on truth.

2. See who they are, whom he is to reprove and convince; the world, both Jew and Gentile. Some in every age, in every place, in order to their conversion to the faith of Christ. Now this was encouragement to the disciples, in reference to the difficulties they were to meet with. Even this malignant world the Spirit shall work upon; and the conviction of sinners is the comfort of faithful ministers.

3. See what it is of which the Spirit shall convince the world.

(1.) Of sin, Because they believe not on me. To convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin; of the fault of sin; of the folly of sin; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates that all the world is guilty before God. The Spirit in conviction fastens especially upon the sin of unbelief, their not believing in Christ. As the great reigning sin; there was, and is a world of people, that believe not in Jesus Christ. As the great ruining sin; it is a sin against the remedy. As that which is at the bottom of all sin. The Spirit shall convince the world that the true reason why sin reigns among them, is, because they are not by faith united to Christ. The awakened sinner begins to perceive that unbelief arises from pride, love of sin, and enmity to God; that it is the source, and, as it were, the substance of all other sins.

(2.) Of righteousness, Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more, ver. 10. We may understand this of Christ's personal righteousness. He shall convince the world, that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous. He is proved to be a righteous man, and not a deceiver; and then the point is gained, for then he is the great Redeemer. Also of Christ's righteousness, communicated to us for our justification and salvation; that everlasting righteousness which Messiah was to bring in, Dan. 9. 24. The Spirit shall convince men of this righteousness; having by convictions of sin, showed them their need of a righteous-

ness, he will show them where it is to be had, and how they may be accepted as righteous in God's sight. Christ's ascension is the great argument to convince men of this righteousness. It proves the ransom was accepted, and the righteousness finished; through which believers were to be justified; therefore there is no need for him to appear again on earth till he shall come to judge the world.

(3.) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. The Spirit convinces the world of inherent holiness and sanctification, Matt. 12. 18. By the judgment of the prince of this world it appears that Christ is stronger than Satan. Also of a new and better dispensation of things. He shall show that Christ's errand into the world, was to introduce times of reformation and regeneration. All will be well when his power is broken, who made all the mischief. And of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus. As Satan is subdued by Christ, we may be sure no other power can stand before him. And further, of the final day of judgment; all the obstinate enemies of Christ's gospel and kingdom shall be reckoned with, for the devil is judged. Thus sinners are convinced and brought to condemn themselves, and plead guilty before God.

Hereafter the disciples should be strengthened to bear those discoveries, which were so contrary to the notions they had received of the kingdom of God, that they could not bear them now.

III. That the coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples. Christ intimates the tender sense he had of their present weakness. He assures them of sufficient assistance, by the pouring out the Spirit. To guide the apostles, he will take care they do not miss their way. The Spirit guided their tongues in speaking, and their pens in writing to secure them from mistakes. The Spirit is our Guide, Rom. 8. 14; not only to show us the way, but to go with us by continued aids and influences.

That they do not come short of their end, He will guide them into all truth. To be led into a truth is more than barely to know it; it is to be intimately and experimentally acquainted with it; not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but the relish, and savour, and power of it in our hearts. The Spirit shall teach nothing but the truth, for he shall not

speak of himself any doctrine distinct from that of the Son, but whatever he knows to be the mind of the Father, that, and that only, shall he speak. Men's word and spirit often disagree, but the eternal word and the eternal Spirit never do so.

He shall teach all truth, and keep back nothing that is profitable, for he will show things to come. The Spirit was a Spirit of prophecy in the apostles; it was foretold he should be so, Joel 2. 28, and he was so. We should not regret that the Spirit does not now show things to come in this world, as he did to the apostles; it suffices, that the Spirit in the word hath showed us things to come in the other world, which are our chief concern.

The Spirit undertook to glorify Christ. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching, and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ. The Spirit glorified Christ, by leading his followers into the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. 4. 21. All that the Spirit shows us for our instruction and comfort, all that he gives us for our strength and quickening, and all that he secures and seals to us, all belonged to Christ, and was received from him. The Spirit came not to erect a new kingdom, but to glorify Christ. Herein the things of God should be communicated. Spiritual blessings in heavenly things are given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son intrusts the Spirit to convey them to us.

As these things contain the substance of the work of the Holy Ghost, in convincing, converting, comforting, and sanctifying believers in every age, we may conclude our Lord did not merely speak of the Spirit's miraculous influences in the days of the apostles. It behoves every one to inquire, whether the Holy Spirit hath begun a good work in his heart. Without clear discovery of our guilt and danger, we never shall understand the value of Christ's salvation; but when brought to a right estimate of ourselves, we begin to estimate the value of the Redeemer. Then we see the sinfulness of unbelief and neglecting the gospel. Where this holy Comforter resides, he shows the excellency of Christ in all his characters and offices, and leads the believer to rely upon, and to glory in him. We should have more complete views of the Redeemer, and more lively affections towards him, if we more prayed for, and

depended upon the Holy Spirit, and were more careful neither to grieve him by our sins, nor to quench his influences by our negligence.

10. "Of righteousness," That when the world shall see, after Christ's ascension, the power of his Spirit, showered upon the apostles by him, they shall be compelled in conscience, to confess that he was just, and that he was not condemned of God for a blasphemer, as they had judged, but approved and received.—*The Bishop's Bible.*

13—15. *Henry* observes, that this passage puts the Personality of the Holy Spirit beyond all rational doubt. The expression should have been "it," not "he," if the Holy Ghost were only a Divine Energy and not a real Person. Also though the word for Spirit be a neuter, it is accompanied by a masculine relative.

15. *Lampe* remarks, that this passage establishes the whole doctrine of the majesty of the Trinity. Here are three Persons expressly distinguished from each other, and yet among them the closest connexion is said to subsist. The glory ascribed to them is equal, yet this by no means precludes the supposition that the Son is the Heir of the Father, the Holy Spirit the Legatee of both.

§ 129. Ver. 16—22. *Christ's departure and return.*

In a few hours the Lord Jesus was to be removed from his disciples' sight. It is good to consider how near to a period our seasons of grace are, that we may be quickened to improve them while they are continued. But after a short time they would see him again, as risen from the dead; or, after a brief continuance of their lives on earth they would see him in glory. They did not understand his meaning, but he, knowing their perplexity, declared that overwhelming sorrows were coming upon them, while the world would rejoice, as if they had obtained a victory, when he was nailed to the cross. But the sorrows of the disciples would soon be turned into joy, as those of a mother at the sight of her infant. He would certainly see them again, and then they should have solid joy communicated to them. The Holy Spirit would be their Comforter, and neither men nor devils, neither sufferings in life, nor in death, would ever deprive them of their joy. Believers have joy or sorrow, according as they have or have not a sight of Christ, and the tokens of his presence with them. But that which is the grief of saints is the joy of sinners.

Our Lord's resurrection should be so completely demonstrated, that they should never doubt concerning it. Consequently their joy should be great and permanent, knowing the atonement was made, the victory gained, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers.—(11.)

A little while believers must be absent\* from their beloved Saviour. They may often be called to lament for their sins, and through manifold tribulations, while the ungodly around them are rejoicing. But their joys, as well as the believer's sorrows, soon pass away—they have fears and forebodings to damp their mirth; he has hopes and foretastes of joy to alleviate his afflictions. Sorrow is coming on the ungodly, which nothing can mitigate; the believer is heir to joy no one can take away. Where now is the joy of the murderers of our Lord, or the sorrow of his friends? The latter have seen him again, and are filled with consolation. Such will be the event of the trials of every believer; let us then come at all times, especially when depressed with sorrow, to the mercy-seat in our Redeemer's name, that we may ask and receive, till our affliction is turned into the fulness of joy. Spiritual mourning will shortly be turned into eternal rejoicing. Gladness is sown for the upright in heart, that sow in tears, and without doubt they shall shortly reap in joy. Their sorrow will not only be followed with joy, but turned into it; for the most precious comforts take rise from pious griefs. Christ will graciously return to those that wait for him, though for a small moment he has seemed to forsake them, Isa. 54, 7. When clouded evidences are cleared up, and interrupted communion revived, then is the soul filled with joy. The world could not rob them of their joy, because it could not separate them from the love of Christ, could not rob them of their treasure in heaven.

§ 129. Ver. 23—27. *Encouragement to prayer.*

The disciples used to ask direction of their Lord, as man, in all their difficulties, but this would soon be ended.

When Jesus should be ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost should come upon the apostles, their views would be so enlarged, that they should not have to ask the meaning of his words. Whatever they asked the Father in his name, would be granted them. Hitherto they had not prayed in His name, or through his intercession; that way of access had not been clearly pointed out. But the way into the holiest was soon to be thrown open by his sacrifice, resurrection, and intercession; then they would learn to plead his atonement as the ground of their hopes; and to come through him as their great High

• **Priest and Advocate.** In this way, enlarging their petitions, their joy and consolation would be abundant and complete.

Asking of the Father includes a sense of spiritual wants, and a desire of spiritual blessings, with conviction that they are to be had from God only. It includes also, humility of address to him, with believing confidence in him, as a Father able and ready to help us. Asking in Christ's name, includes an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness to receive any favours from God, and entire dependence upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness. Our Lord Jesus is above all benefactors; he gives liberally, and is so far from upbraiding us with the frequency and largeness of his gifts, that he rather upbraids us with the fewness and straitness of our requests; "Ye have asked nothing in comparison of what ye want, and what I have to give, and have promised to give." Would we have our joy full, as full as it is capable of being in this world, we must be much in prayer. Ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and ye shall receive it: other knowledge increases sorrow, Eccl. 1. 18, but the knowledge he gives will increase your joy.

Our Lord has hitherto spoken in short and weighty sentences, or parables, the import of which they did not fully understand, but after his resurrection he intended plainly to instruct them in such things as related to the Father and the way of access to him. Then they would pray in his name, but though they would present their petitions through his intercession, yet he meant not that there would be any need for him to importune the Father on their behalf, seeing that He also loved them, because they had been drawn to love and obey his only-begotten Son, and to believe that he came from Him to be the Saviour of mankind.

The frequency with which our Lord enforces the offering up of petitions in his name, shows that the great end of the mediation of Christ is to impress us with a deep sense of our sinfulness, and of the merit and efficacy of Christ's death, whereby we have access to God.—(100.)

Thus the grounds upon which they might hope to speed, are given, ver. 26. 27.

Not only we have an Advocate, but we have to do with a Father. Christ not only turned away God's wrath from us, and brought us into a covenant of peace and reconciliation, but purchased his favour

for us, and brought us into a covenant of friendship. The Father himself, whose favour you have forfeited, and whose wrath you have incurred, and with whom you need an advocate, he himself now loves you. This cautions us against hard thoughts of God. When we are taught in prayer to plead Christ's merit and intercession, it is not as if kindness were in the Son only, and in the Father nothing but wrath. The Father's love and goodwill appointed Christ to be the Mediator. Believers, who love Christ, ought to know that God loves them, therefore should come boldly to him, as children to a loving Father. Let us ever remember, that to address the Father in the name of Christ, or to address the Son as God dwelling in human nature, and reconciling the world to himself, are the same, as the Father and the Son are one.

§ 129. Ver. 28—33. *Christ's discoveries of himself.*

Christ here comforts his disciples,

I. With an assurance that, though leaving the world, he was returning to his Father, from whom he came forth. This is a plain declaration of Christ's mission from the Father, and his return to him: there was nothing he had more inculcated upon them, than these two things—whence he came, and whither he went. That the Redeemer, in his entrance was God manifest in the flesh, and in his departure was received up into glory.

By this saying the disciples improved in knowledge. When Christ speaks plainly to our souls, and brings us to behold his glory, we have reason to rejoice. Also they improved in faith; Now are we sure. Observe the matter of their faith; We believe that thou camest forth from God. And the motive of their faith—that he knew all things, that he resolved the doubts hid in their hearts, and answered the scruples they had not confessed. Those know Christ best, who know him by experience.

Observing how they triumphed in their attainments, he said, Do ye now believe? Do ye now look upon yourselves as advanced and confirmed disciples? Alas! ye know not your own weakness. In a little time they would all desert him.

When they left him alone, every one went his own way, to secure his own; himself and his own life. Those will not dare ~~to~~ suffer for their religion, who seek their own things more than the things of

Christ. He spake of it as a thing very near. A little time may produce great changes, both concerning us and in us.

Yet I am not alone; the Father is with me. This was a privilege peculiar to our Lord. The Divine nature did not desert the human nature, but supported it, and put invincible comfort and inestimable value into his sufferings. When he complained of his Father's forsaking him, yet he called him My God, and was so well assured of his favourable presence as to commit his spirit into his hand. It is a privilege common to all believers, by their union with Christ; when they are alone, they are not alone, but the Father is with them. While we have God's favourable presence, we are happy, and ought to be easy, though all the world forsake us. We do not render due honour to God, unless we deem him alone all-sufficient.

11. Christ comforts them with a promise of peace in him, by his victory over the world, whatever troubles they might meet with. Christ's disciples should have peace within, whatever their troubles may be from without. Peace in Christ is the only true peace, in him alone believers have it. Through him we have peace with God, and so in him we have peace in our own minds. The word of Christ aims at this, that in him we may have peace.

It has been the lot of Christ's disciples to have more or less tribulation in this world. But, all shall be well. In the midst of the tribulations of this world, it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples to keep up their delight in God, whatever is pressing, and their hope in God, whatever is threatening; as sorrowful indeed, in compliance with the temper of the climate, yet always rejoicing, always cheerful, 2 Cor. 6. 10, even in tribulation, Rom. 5. 3. Though he foresaw their misconduct, he had spoken thus affectionately, that in recollecting it they might possess inward peace and tranquillity by peace in Him. The ground of that encouragement is, I have overcome the world. Christ's victory is a christian's triumph. Christ overcame the children of this world, by the conversion of many to the faith and obedience of his gospel. He overcame the wicked of the world; for many times he put his enemies to silence, to shame. He overcame the evil things of the world, by submitting to them; he endured the cross, despising it,

and the shame of it. And he overcame the good things of it, by being wholly dead to them; its honours had no beauty in his eyes, its pleasures no charms. Never was there such a Conqueror of the world as Christ was, and we ought to be encouraged, because Christ has overcome the world before us; so we may look upon it as an enemy that has many times been baffled. And he has conquered it for us, as the Captain of our salvation; by his cross the world is crucified to us. But while we think we stand, let us take heed lest we fall. We know not how we should act if brought into temptation; let us watch and pray without ceasing, that we may not be left to ourselves. We must seek our peace and comfort in Christ, not in the world, which is an enemy, in whatever form it appears, and where we must expect tribulation so long as we continue in it. But, relying on our victorious Saviour, and looking constantly to Him, we may go forward with confidence, assured of being made more than conquerors through him that loved us.

One of the grand subjects in this chapter, *the mediation of Christ*, is but little understood by most christians. Christ, having made an atonement for the sin of the world, has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there he appears in the presence of God for us. In approaching the throne of grace, we keep Jesus, as our sacrificial victim, continually in view: our prayers should be directed through him to the Father; and, under the conviction that his sufferings and death have purchased every possible blessing for us, we should, with humble confidence, ask the blessings we need; and, as in him the Father is ever well pleased, we should most confidently expect the blessings he has purchased. We may consider, also, that his appearance before the throne, in his sacrificial character, constitutes the great principle of his mediation or intercession. He has taken our nature into heaven; in that he appears before the throne: this, without a voice, speaks loudly for the sinful race of Adam, for whom it was assumed, and on whose account it was sacrificed. On these grounds, every penitent and every believing soul, may ask and receive, and their joy be complete. By the sacrifice of Christ we approach God; through the mediation of Christ God comes down to man.—*A. Clarke.*

## CHAPTER XVII.

§ 130. Ver. —5. *Christ's prayer for himself.*

In the preceding chapter our Lord closed his instructions to the apostles. In this he addressed his Father in their presence, by a most interesting prayer. He spake as the incarnate Son of God; he supplicated as a man, and as the Mediator of his people; yet sometimes he expressed himself with majesty and authority, as

one with, and equal to the Father. fervent prayer is right conclusion for religious instruction, and right preparation for approaching trials. The long expected hour was now come, when he was to expiate the guilt of his people by his agonizing sufferings and ignominious death. He therefore prayed that the Father would glorify him. This was by supporting his human nature through his sufferings, enabling him to exercise meekness and patience under all; by the miracles and wonders attending his crucifixion and resurrection; and by his exaltation as Mediator. The Son glorified the Father, both in his humiliation and submission to the Divine law, and in the glory that followed it. As Mediator, power was conferred on him to decide upon, and to determine the frail condition of all the human race; also to give eternal life to all those who had been given to him in the covenant of redemption, by the election of grace. Eternal life could not be given to them, unless Christ, their Surety, both glorified the Father, and was glorified of him. This is the sinner's way to eternal life, and when this knowledge shall be perfected, holiness and happiness will be completely enjoyed.

Dominion over the whole universe, the governance of all human affairs, the regulation of the vicissitudes of times and places, was committed to our Lord, and all this in order to accomplish the work of man's salvation.—(75.)

Our Lord had glorified the Father on earth by his perfect obedience, and was about to glorify him by his expiatory sufferings. He had finished his work on earth, for he was assured of being carried through that awful scene. He therefore called on his Father to glorify him with himself, at his right hand, as invested with all authority, exercising all Divine perfections, and receiving all adoration, according to the glory he had with the Father before the creation of the world.

It appears that the exhibition of Divine grace in the sanctification and happiness of the redeemed, are especially that glory of Christ, and of his Father, which was the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame; and, that this glory was especially the end of the travail of his soul, in obtaining which end he was fully satisfied.—(21.)

Thus we are taught that those, and

only those, who glorify God on earth, and persevere in the work God hath given them to do, shall be glorified with the Father, when they must be no more in this world. Not that we can merit that glory as Christ did, but our glorifying God is required as an evidence of our interest in Christ, through whom eternal life is God's free gift.

3. There are sound reasons against any view of this passage derogatory to the coequal Deity of the Son. It proceeds throughout upon the ground of his mediatorial works and office. Under this character our Lord speaks the language of entire subordination, but in this prayer itself are expressions respecting himself, incompatible with any but the Supreme nature. He speaks of power over all flesh, ver. 2, &c. The knowledge here intended must embrace all things which the Father hath, and in scriptural use, "to know," is taken for acknowledging, revering, highly regarding, and loving. The whole comprehension of the text may be considered under the guidance of the inspired maxim, "Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father: he who acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also," 1 John 2, 23.—*J. P. Smith.*

*Middleton* observes, that in the time of our Saviour the dispute was between a plurality of Gods or only one, not about the nature and essence of the one true God, and that it is quite wrong to interpret phrases from or by opinions subsequently adopted. Our Saviour here directs the mind to the great truths of natural and revealed religion.

§ 130. Ver. 6-10. *Christ's intercessory prayer for his disciples.*

Christ, having prayed for himself, comes next to pray for those that are his. Our Lord had the apostles chiefly in view, but not exclusively. He had manifested the perfections and the will of the Father to those who had been given to him from among the people of the world, with whom they had associated before they were called to be his disciples. They were not only the creatures of the Father's power, but the objects of his choice; they were given to the Son to be redeemed and saved by him. Thou gavest them me, as sheep to the shepherd, to be kept; as a patient to the physician, to be cured; as children to a tutor, to be educated; thus he will deliver up his charge. At length they had received and obeyed his word, having been assured that all things Jesus had done and taught, were according to the will of the Father. They had received the words of their Lord with faith, and were convinced of his Divine mission and authority. They understood the word, and were sensible on what ground they went in receiving and keeping it. All Christ's offices and powers, all the gifts



of the Spirit, all his graces and comforts, which God gave without measure to him, were all from God; contrived by his wisdom, appointed by his will, and designed by his grace, for his own glory in man's salvation. It is great satisfaction to us, in our reliance upon Christ, that he, all he is and has, and all he said and did, all he is doing and will do, are of God, 1 Cor. 1. 30. We may therefore venture our souls upon Christ's mediation. If the righteousness be of God's appointing, we shall be justified; if the grace be of his dispensing, we shall be sanctified.

Christ therefore offered this prayer for them alone as believers; not for the world at large, who are not interested in his intercession, unless of the number given unto Christ to be saved by him, as those who were now brought to believe in him. These were the Father's, though given to the Son, by reason of the perfect union between them; so perfect, that all things belonging to the one belong equally to the other. As the disciples were alike beloved of the Son and of the Father, so, by his intercession being made effectual, he would be glorified in their salvation, and by their holy lives and labours.

Yet no trembling sinner who desires to come to the Father, and is conscious that he is unworthy to come in his own name, need be discouraged by the Saviour's declaration, that He prays not for the world; for he is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Earnest convictions and desires are hopeful tokens that a man is one of those who were given unto Christ; when they lead him to the throne of grace, through faith in his word, the work already wrought in him begins to evidence that he hath been chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. No man, whatever he professes or preaches, can have any knowledge of his election, except by that faith which worketh by love.

The plea particularly urged for his disciples is, *They are thine*. All that receive Christ's word, and believe in him, are taken into covenant relation to the Father, and are looked upon as his. Christ has redeemed us, not to himself only, but to God, by his blood, Rev. v. 9, 10. This is a good plea in prayer, Christ here pleads it, *They are thine*; we may plead it for ourselves, *I am thine, save me*; and for others, (as Moses, Exod. 32. 11,) *They are*

*thy people. They are thine; wilt thou not provide for thine own? Wilt thou not secure them? Observe the foundation on which this plea is grounded, All mine are thine, and thine are mine. This speaks the Father and Son to be one in essence. None can say to him, All thine are mine, but he that is the same in substance with him, and equal in power and glory. One in interest; no separate or divided interests between them. All mine are thine. The Son owns none for his that are not devoted to the service of the Father.*

§ 130. Ver. 11—16. *Christ's prayer.*

After the general pleas with which Christ recommended his disciples to his Father's care, follow the particular petitions he puts up for them; and 1. They all relate to spiritual blessings in heavenly things. He does not pray that they might be rich and great in the world, but that they might be kept from sin, and furnished for their duty, and brought safe to heaven. The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity; for what relates to that, Christ came to purchase and bestow, and so teaches us to seek, in the first place, both for others and for ourselves. 2. They are blessings suited to their present state and case, and their various exigencies and occasions. Our Advocate with the Father is acquainted with all the particulars of our wants and burdens, our dangers and difficulties, and knows how to accommodate his intercession to each.

Jesus was about to leave the world, but was concerned for his disciples, who were to continue in the midst of dangers and tribulations. He therefore interceded with his Holy Father, that he would keep them by his power and for his glory, that they might be intimately united in affection and labours, even according to the union of the Father and the Son. Christ had hitherto, by his personal instructions, preserved them thus. None had departed from him save Judas, who appears to be mentioned, not as an exception, but to point him out. He had always been a hypocrite, and was now a traitor, therefore Christ could not mean to include him in that number. Many have called Christ Lord, who have proved to be sons of perdition, but in them has the scripture been fulfilled, they never truly believed Christ's word, therefore did not keep it.

Before Jesus ascended to his glory, he spake all these things that the apostles and their brethren might have his joy

fulfilled in them. They would need this support, as he had given the Father's word to them, that they might preach and profess it before men; and the world had already begun to hate them, because they were no longer of that party, but opposite in every thing, according as He had not been of the world.

He did not pray that his disciples should be removed out of the world, that they might escape the rage of men, for they had a great work to do for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind; at the same time they must be ripened for heaven by passing through divers tribulations. They should be willing to die, though they ought not impatiently to desire it. But he prayed that the Father would preserve them from the evil, from being corrupted by the world, the remains of sin in their hearts, and from the power and subtilty of Satan. So that they might pass through the world as through an enemy's country, as he had done. They are not left here to pursue the same objects as the men around them, but to glorify God, to serve their generation, and to be perfected through sufferings, after the example of the Captain of their salvation.

The Spirit of Christ in true christians, is opposed to the spirit of the world. Christ's disciples were weak, and had many infirmities; yet this he could say for them, They were not of the world, not of the earth, and therefore he recommends them to the care of Heaven.

11. The words plainly teach that Christ, as a human being, was no longer to be an inhabitant of this our earthly state, but that he occupies some actual regions of purity and joy, from whence he shall, at the appointed season, be manifested in glory, and shall come to judge the living and the dead, "at his appearing and his kingdom," Col. 3. 4; 2 Tim. 4. 1.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 130. Ver. 17—19. *Christ's prayer.*

Christ next prayed for the disciples, that they might be sanctified; not only kept from evil, but made good. Father, make them holy, that will be their preservation, 1 Thess. 5. 23. Observe here,

1. The grace desired—sanctification. He prays, Father, sanctify them, that is, Confirm the work of sanctification in them, strengthen their faith, inflame their good affections, fix their good resolutions. Carry on that good work in them, and continue it; let the light shine more and more. Complete it, sanctify them throughout and to the end. It is the prayer of Christ for all that are his, that they may

be sanctified; and those who through grace are sanctified, need to be sanctified more and more. Even disciples must pray for sanctifying grace. Not to go forward is to go backward. It is God that sanctifies, as well as God that justifies, 2 Cor. 5. 5. It is encouragement to pray for sanctifying grace, that Christ intercedes for it on our behalf.

2. The means of conferring this grace—through thy truth, thy word is truth. Not that the Holy One of Israel is limited to means, but Divine revelation, as it stands in the written word, is not only pure truth without mixture, but entire truth without deficiency. This word of truth is the outward and ordinary means of sanctification; not of itself, but as the instrument the Spirit commonly uses in the beginning and carrying on that good work. Sanctify *them*, set them apart for thyself and thy service. Qualify them for the office, with christian graces and ministerial gifts, to make them able ministers of the New Testament. Own them in the office; let thy hand go with them: sanctify them by or in truth, sanctify them really. The great thing to be asked of God for ministers, is, that they may be sanctified, effectually separated from the world, devoted to God, experimentally acquainted with the influence of that word on their hearts, which they preach.

We have here two pleas for the disciples' sanctification. 1. The mission they had from Christ, As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them. He was sent of God to say what he said, and do what he did, and to be what he is to those that believe on him; which was his comfort in his undertaking, and may be ours abundantly, in our dependence upon him. His record was on high, from thence was his mission. It magnifies their office that it comes from Christ, and that there is some affinity between the commission given to the ministers of reconciliation, and that given to the Mediator. He is called an Apostle, Heb. 3. 1; a Minister, Rom. 15. 8; a Messenger, Mal. 3. 1. They are sent as servants, he as a Son. 2. For their sakes I sanctify myself. He entirely devoted himself to the undertaking, and all the parts of it, especially the offering up himself without spot unto God, by the eternal Spirit. He, as the Priest and Altar, sanctified himself as the Sacrifice. It is that they may be sanctified, that they may be saints and minis-

ters accepted of God. The office of the ministry is the purchase of Christ's blood, one of the blessed fruits of his satisfaction, and owes its value to the blood of Jesus. And the real holiness of all true christians is the fruit of Christ's death, by which the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased; he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it, Eph. 5. 26. He that designed the end, designed also the means, that they might be sanctified by the truth, the truth Christ came into the world to bear witness to, and died to confirm. The word of truth receives its sanctifying power from the death of Christ. Let us carefully examine whether the doctrines we hold have a sanctifying effect upon our hearts and lives; for, as all Divine truth is of a holy nature, if our sentiments have not this effect on us, they are not Divine truth, or we do not receive them by a living and operating faith, but as mere notions in our minds.

§ 130. Ver. 20—23. *Christ's prayer.*

Christ interceded for all christians, to the end of the world, and here is much instruction and consolation to us. He interceded for all who should believe through the word of his apostles and ministers. Our Lord especially prayed that all such persons might be united together in the bonds of love, as one body under one head, animated by one soul, by their union with Christ and the Father in him, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The more closely they are united and live in peace and harmony, the more clearly do they evidence the Divine original and excellency of the gospel, to the conviction of the world around them. But the more they dispute about lesser things, the more do they throw doubts upon the truth and excellency of christianity. True believers should be cautious in this respect.

Our Lord gave his disciples the glory of concurring in that great design for which he lived and died, and of being anointed, in their measure, by the Holy Ghost for that service, that under the teaching and influence of that one Spirit, they might be made complete as one body in Christ, and in the Father, through him, so that all might see they were a holy and happy people; that their religion was of heavenly origin, because of its nature and tendency; and that they were proper objects of God's special love, for Christ's sake, according to the Fa-

ther's love to him in whom he was well pleased.

Blessed be God, that we are interested in this prayer of our Redeemer, if we indeed believe in him, according to the word of his holy apostles. Let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, praying that all believers may be united in one mind and one judgment. Let us also pray for more abundance of holy love, that a spirit of mutual forbearance and kindness, among all who appear to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, may convince the world that they are all of one heart and soul, though separated by outward circumstances. Thus shall we convince the world of the truth and excellency of our religion, and experience more sweet and sanctifying communion with the God of our salvation and with his saints.

21. This and similar expressions point out an intimate union of holy mental affections between the Father of spirits and his faithful servants, in the present state; the communion of gracious influences on his part, and of devotional feelings, and actions on theirs, and that perfection of both which will subsist in the heavenly state.—*J. P. Smith.*

§ 130. Ver. 24—26. *Christ's prayer.*

The language of ver. 24 is very remarkable. Christ dispenses the benefits of his intercession by his own authority and sovereign will, as one with the Father. He claimed on behalf of all that had been given to him, and should in due time believe on him, that they should at length be safely brought to heaven, the place of his special presence as God; and that there the whole company of the redeemed might behold his glory as their beloved Friend and Brother, and therein find their happiness. The redeemed will have clear insight into his glorious undertaking, as then it will be accomplished; they will see into those springs of love, from whence flow all the streams of grace; they shall have an appropriating sight of Christ's glory. The Father loved him before the foundation of the world, because he approved his work as Mediator, as showing his glory in the salvation of his people.

The last verses refer primarily to the apostles. The world had not known Him, for it was in rebellion against him. He had known the Father, and the apostles had believed the Father had sent him. He had declared and would further declare the name or character of God to them, by his doctrine and his Spirit, that, being one with him, the love of the Father to

Him might be communicated to, and abide with them also. Thus, being joined to him by one Spirit, they might be filled with all the fulness of God, and come as near the source of all happiness as is possible for creatures, and hereafter enjoy blessedness such as we can form no adequate idea of in our present state.

This was the last, the farewell interview of Jesus and his eleven apostles alone. Mark his last words,—That the Father's love wherewith he had loved him, might be in them; and he in them. Here was an assurance of the everlasting love of Jesus, and the sameness of his love to his church, to the end of the world. That love could not increase, neither could it diminish, neither to them nor to all his church. His love shall be with them; and constant, fresh manifestations and discoveries of it shall be for ever. So the Lord Jesus declared. And so his people at the present hour can bear witness, and they can set to their seal in confirmation, having received this testimony, that God is true.—(37.)

### CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1-27. M. 26. 30-75. Mk. 14. 26-72.

L. 22. 39-65.

Ver. 28-40 M. 27. 1-21. Mk. 15. 1-12.

L. 23. 1-20.

§ 131, 132. Ver. 1-12. *Christ taken in the garden.*

Our Lord went forth with his disciples. He would not alter his method, either to meet the cross or to miss it, when his hour was come. It was his custom when he was at Jerusalem, after he had spent the day in public, to retire at night to the mount of Olives. He went over the brook Cedron; the notice of this intimates there was something in it significant. In David's flight from Absalom, particular notice is taken of his passing the brook Cedron, and going up the ascent of mount Olivet weeping, and all that were with him in tears, 2 Sam. 15. 23, 30. The Son of David passed over the brook in meanness and humiliation, attended by a company of true mourners, being driven out by the rebellious Jews, who would not have him to reign over them, and Judas, like Ahithophel, being in the plot against him. This evangelist only notices that Christ's sufferings began in a garden. In the garden of Eden sin began, there the curse was pronounced, there the Redeemer was promised; and in a garden that promised Seed entered the lists with the old serpent.

Christ was buried also in a garden. Let us, when we walk in our gardens, take occasion from thence to meditate on Christ's sufferings in a garden. When we are in the midst of our possessions and enjoyments, we should keep up an expectation of troubles, for our gardens of delight are in a vale of tears. Christ had his disciples with him. He would take them into the danger to show them their weakness, notwithstanding the promises they had made of fidelity.

Judas' knowledge of the place aggravates his sin. Many an apostate could not have been so profane as he is, if he had not been a professor; could not have ridiculed scriptures and ordinances if he had not known them. This evangelist passes over Christ's agony; the others had fully related it. Observe what enemies Christ and his gospel have had and are likely to have; numerous and powerful, therefore formidable; ecclesiastical and civil powers combined against him, Ps. 2. 1, 2. Christ said it would be so, Matt. 10. 18, and found it so. Our Lord Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth undisturbed and undaunted, and met them, and asked, Whom seek ye? When the people would have forced him to a crown, he withdrew, and hid himself, ch. 6. 15, but when they came to force him to a cross, he offered himself; for he came to this world to suffer, and went to the other world to reign. Though they called him Jesus of Nazareth, he answered to the name, for he despised the reproach. He has hereby taught us to own him, whatever it cost us; not to be ashamed of him or his words, but even in difficult times to confess Christ crucified.

Judas stood with them. He that used to stand with those who followed Christ, now stood with those that fought against him! This describes an apostate. Christ obliged them to retire; they went backward, and fell to the ground. Hereby he showed plainly what he could have done; when he struck them down he could have struck them dead, but he would not do so; 1. Because the hour of his suffering was come, and he would not put it by. 2. Because he would give an instance of his patience and forbearance with the worst of men, and of compassion to his very enemies. By Divine permission they rose up again; it is only in the other world that God's judgments are everlasting.

ing. They are still eager to seize him. There are hearts so hard in sin, that nothing will work upon them to reclaim them.

They might even, perhaps, ascribe it to the special providence of God that they received no further injury! The most corrupt heart has reasonings ready to support it in sin.—(80.)

Christ improved this advantage for the protection of his followers. He charges them, Let these go their way. Herein Christ gives us great encouragement to follow him; for though he has allotted us sufferings, yet he considers our frame. He gives us a good example of love to our brethren, and concern for their welfare. He confirmed the word he had spoken a little before, ch. 17. 12. Of them which thou gavest me, I have lost none. Christ, by fulfilling that word in this particular, gave assurance that it should be accomplished in the full extent, for all that should believe on him through their word. Though Christ's keeping them was meant especially of the preservation of their souls from sin and apostasy, it is here applied to the preservation of their natural lives. Christ will preserve the natural life for the service to which it is designed. This preservation of the disciples was, in its tendency, a spiritual preservation. The safety and preservation of the saints are owing, not only to the Divine grace in proportioning the strength to the trial, but to the Divine providence in proportioning the trial to the strength. Having provided for the safety of his disciples, he rebukes and represses their violence as he had repulsed the violence of his persecutors. It must have been the effect of Divine interposition, that the officers and soldiers permitted the disciples to withdraw quietly after the resistance which had been offered. Christ has here set us an example of meekness in sufferings. Peter must put up his sword, for it was the sword of the Spirit that was to be committed to him; weapons of warfare not carnal yet mighty. Observe the reason for this rebuke; The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? Matthew relates another reason which Christ gave for this rebuke, but John preserves this, in which Christ gave a full proof of his own submission to his Father's will, and a pattern of submission to God's will in every thing that concerns us. It

is but a *cup*, a small matter comparatively, be it what it will. It is a cup that is *given us*; sufferings are gifts. It is given us by a *Father*, who has a father's authority, and does us no wrong; a father's affection, and means us no hurt. From the example of our Saviour we should learn how to receive our lighter afflictions, and to ask ourselves whether we ought to oppose our Father's will, or to distrust his love. He calmly yielded himself a prisoner, not because unable to make his escape, but because he would not.

They took Jesus. They bound him. This particular of his sufferings is noticed only by this evangelist, that, as soon as he was taken he was bound. See their folly that they should think to fetter that power which had just proved itself omnipotent! We were bound with the cords of our iniquities, Prov. 5. 22, with the yoke of our transgressions, Lam. 1. 14. Christ, being made sin for us to free us from those bonds, himself submitted to be bound for us, else we had been bound hand and foot, and reserved in chains of darkness. To his bonds we owe our liberty, his confinement was our enlargement; thus the Son makes us free. The types and prophecies of the Old Testament were herein accomplished. And Christ's bonds for us were designed to make our bonds for him easy to us, if at any time we are called to suffer for him; and to sanctify them, and put honour upon them; these enabled Paul and Silas to sing in the stocks.

3. The moon was then at the full, but these lights might have been provided to search obscure corners or caverns, in which they perhaps expected Christ would be concealed.

6. The words plainly show the guards were struck to the earth by a miraculous power

§ 133, 134. Ver. 13—27. *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas.*

We have here Christ's arraignment before the high-priest, and some passages which occurred, omitted by the other evangelists. Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas the high-priest; to whom he sent him bound.

In the house of Caiaphas, Simon Peter began to deny his Master. The particulars have been noticed elsewhere. They teach us to take heed of tempting God by running upon difficulties beyond our strength. If our call to expose ourselves be clear, we may hope God will enable us to honour him; if it be not, we may fear that God will leave us to shame ourselves.

It should seem, the first attempt against Christ was to prove him a seducer, and a teacher of false doctrine, which this evangelist relates; and when they failed in the proof, than they charged him with blasphemy, as related by the other evangelists, therefore omitted here.

The high priest, desiring Christ should be sacrificed to private malice under colour of the public good, examined him concerning his disciples, that he might charge him with sedition, and represent him as dangerous to the Roman government, as well as to the Jewish church. And, concerning his doctrine, that they might bring him under the law against false prophets, Deut. 13. 9, 10. This was a matter properly cognizable in that court, Deut. 17. 12, therefore a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, where that court sat. They could not prove any thing, but they hoped to make him an offender for some word or other, Isa. 29. 21. They said nothing concerning his miracles, by which he had done so much good, and which proved his doctrine beyond contradiction. Thus the adversaries of Christ, while they quarrel with his truth wilfully shut their eyes against the evidences of it.

As to his disciples, he said nothing. As to his doctrine, he said nothing in particular, but referred himself to those who heard him, it being not only manifest to God, but made manifest also in their consciences. He tacitly charges his judges with illegal proceedings. He insists upon his fair and open dealing with them in the publication of his doctrine. The crime the sanhedrim by the law was to inquire after, was clandestine spreading of dangerous doctrines, enticing secretly, Deut. 13. 6. As to this Christ clears himself very fully; and as to the manner of his preaching; as to the person he preached to; as to the places he preached in. As to the doctrine itself; he said nothing in secret, contrary to what he said in public, but only by way of repetition and explanation. He appeals to those who heard him. The doctrine of Christ may safely appeal to all that know it, and those who judge impartially, cannot but witness to it.

While the judges were examining him, the servants that stood by, abused him. One of the officers struck him. Now the scripture was fulfilled, Isa. 50. 6, I gave my cheeks to blows. Wicked rulers will not want wicked servants, who will help

forward the affliction of those whom their masters persecute. Christ bore this affront with wonderful meekness. He could have answered with a miracle of wrath, and could have withered the hand that was lifted up against him; but this was the day of his patience and suffering, and he answered them with the meekness of wisdom. Christ did not here turn the other cheek, by which it appears that Matt. 5. 39, is not to be understood literally. \*A man may possibly turn the other cheek, and yet have his heart full of malice; but, comparing Christ's precept with his example, we learn that in such cases we must not be our own avenger, nor judges in our own cause. Our resentment of injuries done us, must never be passionate. He expostulated with the man that did him the injury, and so may we.

While the servants were thus abusing Christ, Peter was proceeding to deny him.

Very profitable is it for the christian to mark how the powers of darkness favoured the approach of their victim. No opposition was made to Peter's following Jesus. Notwithstanding his act of violence to the servant of the high priest, he is permitted to arrive unmolested at the palace gate. There an impediment did arise; the gates are locked, his entrance on that scene of temptation appears impossible. But Satan does not suffer himself thus to be deprived of his expected prey; one is found, even in the high priest's palace, to open the door, and to bring in Peter. If you stand at the door of forbidden pleasures, at the gate of temptation, Satan will find even some friend to open a way for your present desires, your future ruin.—(8.)

Peter repeated the sin the second time. He repeated the sin the third time. This assault of the temptation was more close than the former; before, his relation to Christ was only suspected, here, it is proved by one that saw him with Jesus, and saw him draw his sword in his defence. Notice is taken of this servant's being akin to Malchus, a circumstance which probably made it the more terror to Peter. He denied again. See here, 1. The nature of sin in general; the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of it, Heb. 3. 13. Peter was arrived at strange effrontery on a sudden, that he could with such assurance stand in a lie; but the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. 2. The sin of lying in particular

is a fruitful sin ; one lie needs another to support it, and that another.

§ 135. Ver. 28—32. *Christ before Pilate.*

We have here Christ's arraignment before Pilate, the Roman governor. They took this course, 1. That he might be put to death with the formalities of justice. 2. If they could engage the Roman government in the matter, there would be little danger of an uproar. 3. The death of the cross, which the Romans commonly used, being the most ignominious, they were desirous by it to put an indelible mark of infamy upon Christ. This therefore they cried out, Crucify him. 4. It was invidious to put one to death, who had done so much good, therefore they were willing to save themselves from reproach. Many fear the scandal of an ill thing, more than the sin of it.

Observe, their superstition and vile hypocrisy ; the chief priests and elders would not go into court, for fear of touching a Gentile, and thereby contracting pollution. This they scrupled, but made no scruple of breaking through the laws of equity, to persecute Christ to death.

Pilate demands the accusation, suspecting the prosecution to be malicious. They will have Jesus to be a malefactor, and treated as one, upon a general surmise that he was a criminal ; not alleging, much less proving any thing in particular worthy of death or of bonds. The judge sent him back to their own court.

They disowned any authority as judges. There was a providence in it, that either they should have no power to put any man to death, or should decline the exercise upon this occasion, that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die, ver. 32. Observe,

In general, that even those who designed the defeating of Christ's sayings, were made serviceable beyond their intention, to fulfil them, by an overruling hand of God. It is not agreed how far the authority of the Jewish courts at this time extended, but the sayings of Christ were fulfilled, which he had spoken concerning his own death. He had said he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and they should put him to death ; and hereby that saying was fulfilled. He had said that he should be crucified, lifted up. If they had judged him by their law, he had been stoned ; crucifying never was used among the Jews. It was necessary that Christ

should be put to death by the Romans, that, being hanged upon a tree, he might be made a curse for us, Gal. 3. 13, and his hands and feet might be pierced. As the Roman power had brought him to be born at Bethlehem, so now it caused him to die upon a cross ; both according to the scriptures. It is likewise determined concerning us, though not discovered to us, what death we shall die, which should free us from disquieting cares about that matter, Lord, what, and when, and how, thou hast appointed.

§ 135—137. Ver. 33—40. *Christ before Pilate.*

Pilate, after he had conferred with the chief priests, entered into the hall, and called for Jesus to be brought forward. Here is a question put to him, Art thou the king of the Jews ? that king of the Jews who has been so long expected ? Messiah the Prince ; art thou he ? Dost thou call thyself, and wouldest thou be thought so ? For Pilate was far from imagining that really he was so.

Christ answered this question with another ; not for evasion, but as an intimation to Pilate to consider what he did. It is plain that thou hast no reason to say that of thyself. Pilate could not say the Roman government suffered damage, from any thing our Lord Jesus had said or done. He never assumed any secular power, never were any traitorous principles or practices laid to him.

If others tell it thee of me, to incense thee against me, thou oughtest to consider who they are, and whether they who represent me as an enemy to Cesar, are not really such themselves, and use this only as a pretence to cover their malice.

Pilate resents Christ's answer. Am I a Jew, that thou suspectest me to be in the plot against thee ? I know nothing of the Messiah, nor desire to know, and therefore interest not myself in the dispute who is the Messiah. Christ had asked him, whether others told him. Yes, says he, and those thine own people. Thus Christ, in his religion, still suffers by those who are of his own nation, but who do not live up to their profession.

Pilate puts another question to him more general, What hast thou done ?

Christ gives an account of the nature and constitution of his kingdom. It is not of this world ; its nature is not worldly ; it is a kingdom within men, set up in their hearts and consciences, Rom. 14.

17 ; its riches spiritual, power spiritual, and its glory within. Its supports are not worldly ; its weapons are spiritual ; it needed not, nor used secular force to maintain and advance it, it tended not to alter any national establishment in secular things, nor opposed any kingdom but that of sin and Satan. Its tendency and design are not worldly. Its subjects are neither governed by that wisdom, nor enriched with the wealth of the world. If Christ had designed opposition to the government, he would have repelled force with force. But there was no attempt to rescue him, the peaceable behaviour of his disciples on this occasion was enough to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Justly does he conclude, Now you may see my kingdom is not from hence ; in the world, but not of it.

In answer to Pilate's further query, he replies yet more directly. Pilate's plain question was ; Art thou a king then ? It is as thou sayest, I am a King ; for I came to bear witness of the truth. He grants himself to be a King, though not in the sense that Pilate meant it. He explains himself, and shows how he is a King, as he came to bear witness of the truth ; he rules in the minds of men by the power of truth. The foundation, power, and spirit of Christ's kingdom is truth, Divine truth. When he said, I am the truth, he said, in effect, I am a King. He conquers by the convincing evidence of truth, he rules by the commanding power of truth. The subjects of this kingdom are those that are of the truth. All who by the grace of God are rescued from under the power of the father of lies, and are disposed to receive the truth, and submit to the power and influence of it, will hear Christ's voice, will become his subjects, by whom grace and truth came ; so that by hearing Christ's voice, we know that we are of the truth. 1 John 3. 19.

Pilate put a good question, but did not stay for an answer ; he said, What is truth ? and immediately went out again. This was a good question, and could not be put to one that was better able to answer it. Truth is that pearl of great price, which the human understanding has a desire to, and is in quest of ; for it cannot rest but in that which is truth. When we search the scriptures, and attend the ministry of the word, it must be with this inquiry, What is truth ? and with

this prayer, Lead me in thy truth ; into all truth. But many put this question, who have not patience and constancy enough to persevere in their search after truth ; or not humility and sincerity enough to receive it when they have found it, 2 Tim. 3. 7. Thus many deal with their own consciences ; they ask those needful questions, What am I ? What have I done ? but will not take time for an answer. It is uncertain with what design Pilate asked this question.

The result of these conferences was, that Pilate appeared favourable to him. This solemn declaration of Christ's innocence was for the justification and honour of the Lord Jesus. By this it appears, that though he was treated as the worst of malefactors, he never had merited such treatment. Also for explaining the design and intention of his death ; that he died as a Sacrifice for our sins, and that, even in the judgment of the prosecutors themselves, one man should die for the people. And for aggravating the sin of the Jews that persecuted him.

Pilate proposed an expedient for his discharge. He offered to release Jesus to them, according to the custom. If Pilate had possessed the honesty and courage which became a judge, as he found no fault in Jesus, he was bound in conscience to discharge him. But he was willing to please all sides ; and was governed more by worldly wisdom than by the rules of equity. The people appeared implacable against him. The enemies of Christ's holy religion cry it down. But those who think the worse of things or persons for their being exclaimed against, have very little constancy or consideration. How foolish and absurd they were is intimated, for Barabbas was a robber. Thus they do, who prefer their sins before Christ. Sin is a robber, yet foolishly chosen rather than Christ, who would truly enrich us.

Let us look to the Lamb of God, in whom the Roman governor could find no fault at all ; let us endeavour in like manner to make our accusers ashamed ; and let us beware of crucifying Christ afresh, and thereby putting him to open shame.

*Lampe* remarks, that in this account of Christ's passion, John only touches lightly on what had been recorded by other writers, adding what they had omitted. Thus, by his omissions, confirming the truth of what the others had written, as the circumstances he records plainly suppose them.



## CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1-41. M. 27. Mk. 15. L. 23.  
 § 138, 140. Ver. 1-18. *Christ condemned and crucified.*

John seems to have recorded our Lord's being scourged and crowned with thorns, in the exact order in which those events occurred. Pilate, having thus ill-treated the prisoner, presented him to the people, in hope that they would be satisfied, ver. 4, 5. He proposes two things.

1. That he had not found any thing in Jesus which made him obnoxious to the Roman government: I do not find in him the least fault, or cause of accusation. Upon further inquiry, he repeats the declaration he had made. Hereby he again condemns himself. 2. That what he had done to Jesus would make him less dangerous to them. Little did Pilate think with what veneration these sufferings of Christ would in after ages be commemorated by the best and greatest of men, who would glory in that cross and those stripes, which he thought would have been to him and his followers a perpetual reproach.

Observe here, our Lord Jesus came forth, willing to be made a spectacle. Did he go forth thus bearing our reproach? Let us go forth to him bearing his reproach, Heb. 13. 13. Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man. Behold a Man worthy your compassion. Behold a Man not worthy your suspicion; a Man from whom you can fear no danger. The word, however, is very affecting: Behold the Man. It is good for every one of us, with faith, to behold the Man Christ Jesus in his sufferings. Behold him, and love him; be still looking unto Jesus.

The prosecutors were the more exasperated, crying, Crucify him, crucify him. Did their hatred sharpen their endeavours against him? and shall not our love for him quicken our endeavours for him and his kingdom?

Pilate checked their fury, still insisting upon the prisoner's innocence. This reply induced them to add the charge of blasphemy to that of rebellion against the Roman authority. Pilate seems to have been impressed with an apprehension that Jesus might probably be some extraordinary person. Even natural conscience makes men afraid of being found fighting against God. The heathen had some fabulous traditions of incarnate deities appearing sometimes in mean circumstances, and being treated ill by some that suffered for their so doing. He said to

Jesus, Whence art thou? Of earthly or heavenly origin? Our Lord gave him no answer. Pilate was not a competent judge in such a question, and his unjust conduct rendered him unworthy of regard. It was a patient silence, that the scripture might be fulfilled; as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth, Isa. 53. 7. He was silent, because he would say nothing to hinder his sufferings. The silence of our Lord astonished and displeased Pilate, who haughtily inquired why he refused to speak to him, who had power of life and death. Jesus showed that he had this power from above, and would be called to account for his use of it; nor could he have employed it against him if God had not permitted.

As our Lord suffered for the sins both of Jews and Gentiles, it was a special part of the counsel of infinite Wisdom, that the Jews should first purpose his death, and the Gentiles should carry that purpose into effect. But though Pilate was about to contract very great guilt by condemning Jesus, Caiaphas, who, at the head of the Jewish council, had delivered up the Messiah into the hands of idolaters, had much deeper criminality, from the knowledge he possessed, and the character he sustained. The answer was a solemn warning to Pilate to beware what he did, and he seems to have received it accordingly, and to have been the more desirous to release Jesus. The Jews were more violent to get Jesus crucified. They endeavoured, 1. To represent the prisoner as an enemy to Cesar. It has always been the artifice of the enemies of religion, to represent it as hurtful to kings and provinces, when it would be highly beneficial to both. 2. To frighten the judge, by declaring that he could not be attached to the Roman emperor, if he neglected to punish a man accused of aspiring to empire.

It was the preparation of the passover. This is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin in persecuting Christ with such malice and fury; that it was when they should have been purging out the old leaven, to get ready for the passover. Pilate having then ascended his tribunal, sentenced Jesus. He again pointed out the suffering Jesus to the implacable Jews, saying, Behold your king; perhaps in scorn of them. When they persisted in demanding his crucifixion, he asked them whether he should crucify their king.

On other occasions they made many objections to paying tribute to the Roman emperor, but to gratify their malice they at once exclaimed, that they had no king but Cesar. They cried out with the greatest indignation, Away with him, away with him, which speaks disdain as well as malice. So it was written of him, he is one whom the nation abhors, Isa. 49. 7, and they hid as it were their faces from him, Isa. 53. 2, 3. Had not Christ been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God.

Observe here, 1. How plainly this indicates that the time for the Messiah to appear, even the set time, was come; for if the Jews have no king but Cesar, then is the sceptre departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, which should never be till Shiloh come to set up a spiritual kingdom. And, 2. It was righteous with God, to bring upon them that ruin by the Romans, which followed not long after. It is just with God to make that a scourge and a plague to us, which we prefer before Christ. They would have no other king than Cesar, and never have they had any other to this day, but have abode many days without a king, and without a prince, Hos. 3. 4, without any of their own, but the kings of the nations have ruled over them.

Pilate, perhaps deeming this concession important, overcame his scruples, and gave up Jesus to be crucified, the fear of man having greater power over him than the fear of God. The priests and the soldiers joined in leading him away. Now was the Son of man delivered into the hands of men, wicked and unreasonable men. He was led forth for us, that we might escape.

They brought him to the place of execution; he went forth, voluntary in his sufferings. He went forth out of the city, for he was crucified without the gate, Heb. 13. 12. And to put the greater infamy upon his sufferings, he was brought to the common place of execution, as one in all points numbered among the transgressors. There they crucified him, and the other malefactors with him. He was nailed to the cross, as a Sacrifice bound to the altar; as a Saviour fixed for his undertaking. But the scripture was fulfilled; He was numbered among the transgressors. He did not die at the altar among the sacrifices, but among criminals sacrificed to public justice.

And now let us pause awhile, and with an eye of faith look upon Jesus. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? See him who was clothed with glory, stript of it all, and clothed with shame; him who was the praise of angels, made a reproach of men; him who had been with eternal delight and joy in the bosom of his Father, now in the extremities of pain and agony. See him bleeding, see him struggling, see him dying, see him and love him; love him, and live to him, and study what we shall render.

7. The sense is, "By our law he has been found guilty of blasphemy, and condemned; but on account of the feast we could not inflict the punishment, and therefore we had recourse to thee."—*Blumfield*.

A summary of the arguments which show that the sanhedrim still retained the power of inflicting capital punishments, but resorted to the Romans on account of their festival, which would prevent them from putting Jesus to death for some days, and thus render it necessary for them to retain him in custody, at the hazard of a tumult, is given by *Townsend*. But it is considered by *Lightfoot* that capital judgments or sentences against life had been lost to the Jews more than forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

12. Pilate made five, if not seven endeavours to release the innocent Jesus.

13. A tessellated pavement, formed of small pieces of marble and coloured stones, was an ornamental luxury in use among the Romans.

14. The correct reading here appears to be the *third* hour; see Mark 15. 25. The numeral letters for 3 and 6 are very similar, and several manuscripts read "the third." The difference is not essential, even if it could not thus be accounted for. By the Roman method of computing time, John's sixth hour would place our Lord's condemnation about six o'clock; and St. Mark, according to the Jewish account, places the crucifixion at nine. Considering the circumstances recorded to have elapsed between these events, the two calculations cannot be said to differ. *Townsend* considers this the most proper mode of reconciling the two accounts.

§ 141. Ver. 19—30. *Christ on the cross.*

Here are some remarkable circumstances of Christ's dying, more fully related than before. Observe the notice of the inscription on the cross, ver. 20. Many of the Jews read it, not only those of Jerusalem, but those out of the country, and from other countries, strangers and proselytes, who came up to worship at the feast. Multitudes read it, and it occasioned a variety of reflections.

The chief priests would not have it written, The King of the Jews, but that Christ said of himself, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate would not gratify them by allowing the inscription to be altered; which was doubtless owing to a secret power of God upon his heart, that this

attestation of our Lord's character and authority might continue.

The dividing Christ's garments among the executioners is mentioned; but his coat, or upper garment, being without seam, they agreed to cast lots for that.

David foretold this very circumstance, Ps. 22. The event, so exactly answering the prediction, proves the scripture to be the word of God. And that Jesus is the Messias; for in him all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messias had, and have their full accomplishment. These things therefore the soldiers did.

There stood by the cross his mother, and some relations and friends. At first, they stood near, as it is said here, but, it is probable, afterwards the soldiers forced them to stand afar off, as it is said in Matthew and Mark. We find his mother standing by the cross, and her friends with her. She and they were strengthened by Divine power to bear this heavy trial. We know not what we can bear till we are tried, then we know who has said, My grace is sufficient for thee.

Christ tenderly provides for his mother at his death. He saw her standing by, and knew her cares and griefs; and so he settled a new relation between his beloved mother and his beloved disciple. And from that hour, an hour never to be forgotten, that disciple took her to his own home. He directs her to look upon John as her son. See here an instance of Divine goodness, to be observed for our encouragement. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, perhaps where we looked not for it. Christ's example teaches all men to honour their parents in every circumstance of life and death; to provide for their wants, and to promote their comfort by every means in their power. We ought also to act with kindness to the poorest of those whom he loves and who love him. This was honour to John, and a testimony to his prudence and fidelity. Those who truly love Christ, and are loved of him, will be glad of every opportunity to do service to him or his.

Observe here the fulfilling of the scripture, in the giving Christ vinegar to drink. He said, I thirst; and his sufferings doubtless caused his thirst to be very intense. This should satisfy us under all our trials, that the will of God is done, and that the word of God is accomplished. Especially observe the dying word where-

with he breathed out his soul. When he had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and with that, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. Observe, 1. It is finished; that is, the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done its worst. Probably the inward darkness and anguish which began to oppress our Lord's mind in the garden, at this moment were finally dispersed, and he expired in the clear perception and full enjoyment of the light of his Father's countenance. 2. It is finished; that is, the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled. 3. It is finished; that is, all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished and answered. 4. It is finished; that is, the ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to its obligations. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. 5. It is finished; that is, sin is finished, and an end made of transgression by bringing in an everlasting righteousness. The Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world, and it is done, Heb. 9. 26. 6. It is finished; that is, his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul, and those of his body; the storm is over, the worst is past; all his pains and agonies are at an end, and he is entering upon the joy set before him. Let all who suffer for Christ, and with Christ, comfort themselves with this, that yet a little while, and they also shall say, It is finished. 7. It is finished; that is, his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, and now he is no more in this world. This is like that of blessed Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 7, I have finished my course. 8. It is finished; that is, the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed, a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened, which shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid, which shall never fail. Christ had now gone through with his work, and finished it, ch. 17. 4. For, as for God, his work is perfect. And as in the purchase, so in the application of the redemption, he that has begun a good work, will perform it; the mystery of God shall be finished.

His life was not forcibly extorted from him, but freely resigned. The bowing

his head shows submission to his Father's will, and his obedience to death.

25. The wife of Cleophas was the same as the mother of James the Less and of Joseph, Mark 15. 40. There are four women named Mary mentioned in the gospels, among the followers of Jesus. 1. Mary his mother; 2. Mary of Magdala; 3. Mary the sister of Lazarus; 4. Mary, the wife of Cleophas.

29. One sort of hyssop has a woody stalk, above two feet in length. This might be long enough to reach the mouth of Jesus, as there is no reason to suppose the cross was so high as it is usually represented.

30. The expressions of the evangelists in recording this last act of our Lord should be noticed. They are literally as follows: Matthew, He dismissed his spirit; Mark and Luke, He expired; John, He yielded up his spirit.

§ 142. Ver. 31—37. *Christ's side pierced.*

Observe the superstition of the Jews, which occasioned the piercing of Christ's side after his death. As it was the preparation for the sabbath, and that sabbath-day was a high day, because it fell in the passover-week, they would not have the dead bodies remain on the crosses. The law of Moses required that the bodies of malefactors who were hanged on a tree, should be taken down the same day, Deut. 21. 22, 23; and though the Romans frequently left bodies hanging on the cross till they were devoured by birds or beasts of prey, yet they seem generally to have allowed the Jews to bury such as belonged to them. They therefore requested that the legs of the sufferers might be broken, to hasten their deaths, though speedier methods of ending their torture might have been adopted.

Pilate gave orders as the Jews desired; and the soldiers came, hardened against all impressions of pity, and broke the legs of the two thieves. One of these was a penitent, and had received from Christ an assurance that he should shortly be with him in paradise, yet he died in the same pain and misery as the other. Many go to heaven, who have bands in their death, and die in bitterness of soul. The extremity of dying agonies is no obstruction to the living comforts prepared for holy souls beyond death.

A trial was made whether Christ was dead. Jesus died in less time than persons crucified ordinarily did. The structure of his body, perhaps, was more broken by pain; or, rather, it was to show that he laid down his life of himself. Whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

They fully designed to break his legs, but God's counsel being otherwise, it was prevented. One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, aiming at his heart, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

The soldier hereby designed to decide the question whether he was dead or not. But God had a further design herein,

1. To give an evidence of the truth of Christ's death, in order to the proof of his resurrection. This experiment proved he was certainly dead, for this spear broke up the very fountains of life; according to the course of nature, it was impossible a human body should survive such a wound. 2. To illustrate the design of his death. Its being so solemnly attested, intimates there was something peculiar in it.

The blood and water that flowed out, signified those two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ—justification and sanctification: blood for remission, water for regeneration; blood for atonement, water for purification. Guilt contracted must be expiated by blood; stains contracted must be done away by the water of purification. These two must always go together. Ye are sanctified, ye are justified, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Christ has joined them together, and we must not think to put them asunder. They both flow from the pierced side of our Redeemer. To Christ crucified we owe both merit for our justification, and Spirit and grace for our sanctification; and we have as much need of the latter as of the former, 1 Cor. 1. 30.

They also signified the two great ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, by which those benefits are represented, sealed and applied to believers; they both owe their institution and efficacy to Christ. It is not the water in baptism that will be to us the washing of regeneration, but the water out of the side of Christ; not the blood of the grape that will pacify the conscience and refresh the soul, but the blood out of the side of Christ. Now was the Rock smitten, 1 Cor. 10. 4; now was the Fountain opened, Zech. 13. 1; now were the wells of salvation digged, Isa. 12. 3. Here is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.

The truth of this is attested by an eyewitness, the evangelist himself. His record is undoubtedly true; for he wrote not only from his own personal knowledge and observation, but from the dic-

tates of the Spirit of truth, who leads into all truth. He witnessed to these things, that we might believe; he did not record them merely for his own satisfaction or that of his friends, but made them public, to draw men to believe the gospel for their eternal welfare. Let this silence the fears of weak christians, and encourage their hopes; iniquity shall not be their ruin, for there came both water and blood out of Christ's pierced side, both to justify and sanctify them. Of this be sure; he that saw it, bare record.

The scripture was fulfilled, 1. In preserving his legs from being broken, Ps. 34. 20. He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken. There was a type of this in the paschal lamb, which seems here especially referred to, Exod. 12. 46. Neither shall ye break a bone thereof; and it is repeated, Numb. 9. 12, Ye shall not break any bone of it; for which law the will of the Law-Maker is the reason, but the Antitype must answer the type. 2. The scripture was fulfilled in the piercing his side; They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, Zech. 12. 10. It is here implied that the Messiah shall be pierced; and here it had more full accomplishment than in piercing his hands and feet. It is promised that when the Spirit is poured out, they shall look on him and mourn. This was in part fulfilled, when many who were his betrayers and murderers were pricked to the heart, and brought to believe in him; it will be further fulfilled in mercy, when all Israel shall be saved; and in wrath, when those who persisted in their infidelity shall see him whom they have pierced, and wail because of him, Rev. 1. 7. But it is applicable to us all; we have all been guilty of piercing the Lord Jesus, and are all concerned to look on him with suitable affections.

May we then continually look to him, whom, by our sins, we have ignorantly and heedlessly, nay, sometimes against convictions and mercies, pierced; and who shed from his wounded side both water and blood, that we might be washed, and sanctified, and justified in his name, and by the Spirit of our God.

32—34. Passages from classic writers show that it was not unusual to break the legs of crucified criminals, just above the ankle.

The water mixed with the blood, which flowed when the side was pierced, showed that the pericardium was pierced, and consequently a mortal wound inflicted, if Jesus was not already dead.

This circumstance both establishes the reality of the death of our Lord, and meets the absurd notions of some ancient heretics, the Docetæ, who asserted that our Lord had not a real body. John speaks as an eye-witness.

35. "And he that saw, hath testified, (and his testimony is true, and Jesus himself knoweth that he speaketh the truth,) that ye might believe." This parenthetical observation includes the testimony of two witnesses—of the eye-witness John, and an animated appeal to the sufferer himself, as the Searcher of hearts, to vouch it also.—*Hales from Wakefield.* Hales observes it is conformable to John's style elsewhere, 3 John 12.

§ 142. Ver. 38—42. *The burial of Jesus.*

The body of Christ was begged by the interest of Joseph of Ramah or Arimathea, of whom no mention is made except in the narrative of Christ's burial, wherein he was chiefly concerned.

He was a disciple of Christ in secret. Disciples should openly own themselves, yet Christ may have many who are his disciples sincerely, though secretly; better secretly than not at all, especially if, like Joseph, they grow stronger and stronger. Some, who in lesser trials have been timorous, in greater have been very courageous. When God has work to do, he can find out such as are proper to do it, and inspire them for it.

The embalming was done by Nicodemus, another person in a public post. He was a secret friend to Christ, though not his constant follower. He at first came to Jesus by night, but now owned him publicly as before, ch. 7. 50, 51. That grace which at first is like a bruised reed, may afterward resemble a strong cedar.

But why did they take this care about Christ's dead body? Some think we may see in it the weakness of their faith. Firm belief of the resurrection of Christ on the third day, would have saved this care. However, we may plainly see in it the strength of their love. Hereby they showed the value they had for Christ's person and doctrine, and that it was not lessened by the reproach of the cross. We must do our duty accordingly as the present day and opportunity are, and leave it to God to fulfil his promises in his own way and his own time.

Here was care taken of Christ's body; it was wound in linen clothes. In conformity to this example, we ought to have regard to the dead bodies of christians; but not to enshrine and adore their relics, no, not those of the most eminent saints and martyrs. His being buried after the manner of the Jews, teaches us, that in

things of this nature we should conform to the usages of the country where we may live, except in those that are superstitious. The grave ~~was~~ in a garden which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, very near the place where Jesus was crucified; a sepulchre, or vault hewn in the rock.

That Christ's grave should be appointed with the wicked, which was the case of those who suffered as criminals; but that he should be with the rich in his death, as prophesied, Is. 53. 9, are circumstances which, before they happened, it was very improbable should ever be united in the same person.—(77.)

In a sepulchre in a garden, Christ's body was laid. In the garden of Eden death and the grave first received their power, and now in a garden they are conquered, disarmed, and triumphed over. In a garden Christ began his passion, his sufferings, and from a garden he would rise, and begin his exaltation.

He was buried in a new sepulchre. This was so ordered for the confirming of the truth of his resurrection, that it might not be suggested that it was not he, but some other that rose. There laid they Jesus. Even this dead body was Jesus—a Saviour, for his death is our life; Jesus is still the same, Heb. 13. 8. There they laid him, because it was the preparation day. We are here taught not to be particular as to the place of our burial. Christ was buried in the sepulchre next at hand. Thus, without pomp or solemnity, is the body of Jesus laid in the cold and silent grave. Here is the Sun of righteousness set for a while, to rise again in greater glory, and then to set no more. Here lies a seeming Captive to death, but a real Conqueror over death. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.

39. The quantity of spices used by the Jews at their funerals, was very great. At the funeral of Herod 500 servants followed, bearing spices and aromatics.

## CHAPTER XX.

v.1—19. M.23.1—15. Mk.16.1—14. L.24.1—49.

§ 145, 146. Ver. 1—10. *The sepulchre found to be empty.*

There was nothing which the apostles were more concerned to produce substantial proofs of, than the resurrection of their Master. 1. Because he himself had appealed to it as the most cogent proof of his being the Messiah. 2. Because

upon this the performance of his undertaking for man's redemption and salvation depended. If he gave his life a ransom, and had not resumed it, it would not have appeared that his giving it was accepted as satisfaction.

Mary Magdalene, coming to the sepulchre, finds the stone taken away. This evangelist does not mention the other women, but Mary only, because she was the most active and forward. She came early, while it was yet dark; so early did she set out. Finding the stone taken away, she hastened back to Peter and John, and acquainted them with it. It was a great trial to her, that the body was gone; whereas, if she had understood it rightly, nothing could be more pleasing. Weak believers often make that the matter of their complaint, which is really just ground of hope, and matter of joy. We cry out that this and the other creature-comfort are taken away, and we know not how to retrieve them, when indeed the removal of our temporal comforts, which we lament, is in order to the resurrection of our spiritual comforts, in which we should rejoice.

Observe, Peter, though he had denied his Master, had not deserted his Master's friends; the sincerity of his repentance appears from his associating with the disciple whom Jesus loved. And the disciples' keeping up their intimacy with him, teaches us to restore, with a spirit of meekness, those who have been faulty.

Peter and John went with all speed to the sepulchre, to satisfy themselves of the truth of what was told them, and to see if they could make any further discoveries. It is well when those more honoured than others with the privileges of disciples, are more active than others in the duty of disciples; more willing to take pains, and run hazards, in a good work. See what laudable emulation it is among disciples to strive who shall excel in that which is good. We must do our best, and neither envy those who can do better, nor despise those who do as they can, though they come behind.

The disciple whom Jesus loved in a special manner, and who therefore in a special manner loved Jesus, was foremost. A sense of Christ's love to us, kindling love in us to him again, will make us to excel. The love of Christ will constrain us to abound in every duty more than any thing else. He that was behind was Peter,

who had denied his Master, and was in sorrow and shame for it. Sense of guilt cramps us, and hinders our enlargements in the service of God. When conscience is offended we lose ground.

But Peter, though he came last, went in first, and made a more exact discovery than John. Some disciples are useful to quicken those that are slow; others are useful to encourage the timorous: there is a diversity of gifts, but one Spirit.

Observe, Christ had left his grave-clothes. He rose to die no more; death was to have no more dominion over him, Rom. 6. 9. When we rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, we must leave our grave-clothes behind us, must put off all our corruptions.

The grave-clothes were in order, which serves for evidence that the body was not stolen away while men slept. Now John ventured in, and he saw and believed. He did not merely believe what Mary said, that the body was gone, but he began to believe that Jesus was risen to life again, though his faith was as yet but weak and wavering.

Peter and John, having made their observations, returned to their company: John, convinced that his beloved Lord was indeed risen; Peter, full of astonishment and uncertainty. Some men discern sooner, others investigate more deeply, and they may mutually assist in bringing each other to understand the scripture. But what was the reason the disciples were so slow of heart to believe? As yet they knew not the scripture, that is, they did not consider, and apply, and duly improve what they knew of the scripture, that Christ must rise again from the dead. The disciples themselves were unapt, at first, to believe the resurrection of Christ, which confirms the testimony they afterward gave with so much assurance concerning it; and shows they had no design to advance their own interests by it. Hereby it appears, that they were not only honest men, who would not deceive others, but cautious men, who would not themselves be imposed upon.

§ 147. Ver. 11—18. *Christ appears to Mary.*

The constancy and fervency of Mary Magdalene's affection to the Lord Jesus is here shown. She staid at the sepulchre when Peter and John were gone; there her Master had been laid. She staid there weeping, and these tears loudly spake her affection to her Master. She wept at the

remembrance of his bitter sufferings; wept for his death, and the loss which she and others sustained by it. As she wept, she looked into the sepulchre. Those are likely to seek and find, that seek with affection, that seek in tears. She saw two angels in white, sitting. They spoke to her, asking the cause of her excessive sorrow. She seems, in her confusion, not to have discerned what they were, and answered them nearly as she had replied to the apostles. In this we may see,

1. The weakness of her faith. We often perplex ourselves needlessly with imaginary difficulties, which faith would discover to us as real advantages. Many good people complain of the clouds and darkness they are under, which are the necessary methods of grace for humbling their souls, mortifying their sins, and endearing Christ to them.

2. The strength of her love. Those who have true affection for Christ, cannot but be in great affliction when they have lost either the comfortable tokens of his love in their souls, or the opportunities of conversing with him, and doing him honour in his ordinances. A sight of angels and their smiles, will not suffice without a sight of Christ, and God's smiles in him. Nay, the sight of angels is but an opportunity of pursuing inquiries after Christ. All creatures, the most excellent, the most dear, should be used as means, and but as means, to bring us into acquaintance with God in Christ. The angels asked her, Why weepest thou? I have cause enough to weep, said she, for they have taken away my Lord. None know, but those who have experienced, the sorrows of a deserted soul, which has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven, but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a wounded spirit who can bear?

Before the angels gave Mary any answer, Christ satisfied her inquiries. God now speaketh to us by his Son; none but he himself can direct us to himself. He never said to the soul that sought him, Seek in vain. Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. Mary longs to see the dead body of Christ, and complains of the loss of that, and behold, she sees him alive. Thus He does for his praying people more than they ask or think.

In this appearance of Christ to Mary,

observe, She knew not that it was Jesus, not that he appeared in any other likeness, but it was a transient look she cast upon him, and her eyes being full of tears, she could not well distinguish. He asked her, Woman, why weepest thou? She does not give a direct answer, but, supposing him to be the gardener, said, Sir, if thou hast carried him hence, pray tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. See how her heart was in earnest to find Christ! She puts the question to any one she meets, taking it for granted that this gardener was full of thoughts concerning Jesus as well as herself, and therefore could not but know whom she meant. Christ at length made himself known to her, and gave her infallible assurances of his resurrection. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. It was said with emphasis, and that air of kindness and freedom, with which he was wont to speak to her. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word, his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. When God calls by name in the efficacy of his grace, those whom he knew by name in the counsels of his love, Exod. 33. 12, then he reveals his Son in them, Gal. 1. 16. Christ's sheep know his voice, ch. 10. 4. She was at once aware who it was; It is the voice of my Beloved, Cant. 2. 8. She turned, and said, Rabboni, My Master. It might properly be read with an interrogation, Rabboni? Is it my Master? Is it indeed? With what lively affection she gives this title to Christ! Now she knew the voice of Christ, she turned herself. The soul that hears Christ's voice, and is turned to him, calls him, with joy and triumph, My Master. See with what pleasure those who love Christ speak of his authority over them! My Master, my great Master.

Mary, supposing that he was risen, as Lazarus was, to live among them constantly, and converse with them freely, as he had done, probably was about to take his hand, or cling to his feet in her usual manner; this mistake Christ rectified; she must believe him, and adore him, as exalted. He forbids her to expect the continuance of his bodily presence, he was no more in the world; and therefore she must look higher, and look further, than the present state of things. He directs her not to tarry, and gives a message for his disciples. Though he was now entering upon his glory, and was de-

clared to be the Son of God, with greater power than ever, yet he owns his disciples as his brethren, and expresses himself with more tender affection to them than before; he had before called them friends, but never brethren till now. Though his disciples had lately forsaken him and fled, he forgives, he forgets, and does not upbraid. This was Mary's reward for her constancy in adhering to Christ, and inquiring after him; and a tacit rebuke to the apostles, who had not been so close as she was in attending on the dying Jesus, nor so early as she was in meeting the rising Jesus.

Observe the joint relation to God, resulting from union with Christ. Speaking of that inexhaustible Spring of light, life, and bliss, he says, He is my Father, and your Father; my God, and your God. This is very expressive of that near relation which is between Christ and believers; he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are both one; for they agree in one, Heb. 2. 11. The summary of the new covenant is that God will be to us a God, Christ being the Surety and Head of the covenant. This covenant relation is first upon him, God becomes his God, and so ours; we partaking of a Divine nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and he partaking of the human nature, our God is his God.

Christ's ascension into heaven, in further prosecution of his undertaking for us, is likewise unspeakable comfort. This was intended to be a caution to these disciples, not to expect the continuance of his bodily presence on earth, nor the setting up his temporal kingdom among men. Thus all who are raised to spiritual life, in conformity to Christ's resurrection, are quickened with Christ, that they may rise and sit with him in heavenly places, Eph. 2. 5, 6. Let them not think this earth is to be their home and rest; their eye and aim, and earnest desires, must be upon another world, and this ever upon their hearts, I ascend, therefore I must seek the things which are above.

It was a word of comfort to them, and to all that shall believe in Him through their word; he ascended, to receive those honours and powers which were to be the recompense of his humiliation; he says it with triumph, that those who love him, may rejoice.

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples, whom she found together, that



she had seen the Lord. And as she told them what she had seen, so also what she had heard; she had seen the Lord alive; he had spoken these things unto her, as a message to be delivered to them, and she delivered it faithfully.

Those who are acquainted with the word of Christ themselves, should communicate their knowledge for others' good.

12. It is generally supposed, that the angels mentioned by Matthew and Mark were different. The two mentioned by Luke and John were seen afterwards, and it cannot be ascertained whether they were the same as those mentioned by the other evangelists or not. As to the appearances they assumed, we ought not to be surprised that we cannot comprehend the laws of angelic life.—*See Tuensend.*

15. The word translated "gardener," rather means bailiff or overlooker.

14. "I do not yet ascend," therefore do not lose time by satisfying thyself as to my bodily identity now, for I shall not yet ascend to my Father. Lose not a moment, therefore, in conveying the joyful news to the disciples."—*Valpy.* Or, "Hold me not, for I am not yet going to ascend to my Father; but go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I do ascend (for I shall shortly ascend) unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."—*Chandler.*

Mary was satisfied that Christ was risen, and therefore needed not the proof offered to Thomas.

§ 151, 152. Ver. 19—25. *Christ appears to the disciples.*

On the evening of the day upon which our Lord arose, the apostles and other disciples met together in some room they had procured. Here is a christian assembly solemnized by the disciples, and expressly owned by the Lord Jesus. The evangelists especially notes that this was the first day of the week, and this day is afterwards frequently mentioned by the sacred writers; for it was evidently set apart as the christian sabbath, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection. The disciples had shut the doors for fear of the Jews; and when they had no such expectation, Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them, having miraculously, though silently, opened the doors. It is comfort to Christ's disciples, when their assemblies are reduced to privacy, no doors can shut out Christ's presence.

Christ rose in that natural body which was crucified and laid in the grave, and it is certain that flesh and blood cannot penetrate through a door. Such an idea would destroy not only the end of Christ's coming among them, but would disregard all that he said or did to convince them that the same body which was crucified appeared to them.—(89.)

Before his crucifixion, our Lord had promised the disciples his peace, ch. 14. 27, 28; this he now pronounced, and conferred upon them, thus giving assurance that he was entirely reconciled, and forgave their forsaking him. To convince them also of the reality of his resurrection, he showed them his wounded hands and side, which satisfied their doubts, and made them glad. When Christ manifests his love to believers by the comforts of his Spirit, assures them that because he lives, they shall live also, then he shows them his hands and his side. A sight of Christ will gladden the heart of a disciple at any time; the more we see of Christ, the more we shall rejoice; and our joy will never be perfect till we arrive where we shall see him as he is.

Having repeated to them the assurance of his peace, he confirmed their commission to declare his truth to the world. And, as an earnest of the approaching descent of the Spirit upon them, he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, thus showing that their spiritual life, as well as all their ability for their work, would be derived from him, and depended upon him.

Every word of Christ which is received in the heart by faith, comes accompanied by this divine breathing; and without this there is neither light nor life. Nothing is seen, known, discerned or felt of God, but through this.—(11.)

After this he authorized them to declare the only method in which sin would be forgiven, so that, to the end of time, all decisions or declarations concerning any, in respect to their acceptance with God, are correct, provided they accord with the doctrine and rule of the apostles, but not otherwise. God will never alter this rule of judgment, nor vary from it; those whom the gospel acquits, shall be acquitted, and those whom that condemns, shall be condemned. The language of authority used by our Lord on this single occasion, seems exclusively appropriate to the great Head of the church, and marks the immense disparity between him and his most eminent servants.

This authority did not exist at all in the apostles, but only as declaring the character of those whom God would accept or reject in the day of judgment. They have laid down with the utmost clearness the marks whereby a child of

God may be discerned and be distinguished from a hypocritical professor; and according to what they have declared, shall every case be decided in the day of judgment.—(61.)

Now the Spirit of the Lord rested upon them, to qualify them for all the services that lay before them. Whom Christ employs he will clothe with his Spirit, and furnish with all needful powers.

When we assemble in Christ's name, especially on his holy day, he will meet with us, and speak peace to us. He will assure us of his forgiveness; allay our fears of enemies, and communicate his sacred Spirit of life, love, holiness, and consolation; according as our services or our difficulties require his special assistance, support, and influences.

Thomas, by his absence, missed the satisfaction of seeing his Master risen, and of sharing with the disciples in their joy upon that occasion. Those who absent themselves from the stated solemn assemblies of christians, will surely be losers. But it seems, though Thomas was then absent from them, he was not long away; absenters for a time must not be condemned as apostates for ever; Thomas was not Judas.

Observe with what exultation and triumph the disciples speak—We have seen the Lord. The disciples of Christ should endeavour to build up one another in their most holy faith, both by repeating what they have heard, to those that were absent, as also by communicating what they have experienced. Those who by faith have seen the Lord, and have tasted that he is gracious, should tell others what God has done for their souls; only let boasting be excluded.

Thomas raised objections to justify himself in his unwillingness to believe that his Lord was risen. He either had not heeded, or had not duly regarded what Christ had so often said, according to the Old Testament, that he would rise again the third day. He did not pay a just deference to the testimony of his fellow-disciples. He limited the Holy One of Israel, when he would be convinced by his own method or not at all. The open avowal of this in the presence of the disciples, was an offence and discouragement to them. His proclaiming his unbelief, and that so peremptorily, might be of ill consequence to the rest, who were as yet but weak and wavering. He might,

therefore, justly have been left in his unbelief, after rejecting such sufficient and abundant proof. The fears and sorrows of the disciples are often prolonged as a chastisement for their negligence.

21—23. Here our Lord is clearly declared to be "the Master of the house," of the whole gospel economy, proceeding on his own sovereign authority.—*J. P. Smith.*

25. Rather, "Put my hand upon his side." See, *Doddridge.*

§ 152. Ver. 26—29. *The unbelief of Thomas removed.*

We have here an account of another appearance of Christ to his disciples, after his resurrection, when Thomas was with them. A melancholy week, we have reason to think, Thomas had, drooping, and in suspense, while the other disciples were full of joy; but it was owing to his own folly and unbelief.

That one day in seven should be religiously observed, was an appointment from the beginning; and that, in the kingdom of the Messiah, the first day of the week should be that solemn day—this was indication enough that Christ on that day once and again met his disciples in a religious assembly. The religious observance of that day has been from thence transmitted down to us through every age of the church. This, therefore, is the day which the Lord has made.

Thomas was now with them; though he had withdrawn himself once, yet not a second time. When we have lost one opportunity, we should give the more earnest heed to lay hold on the next. And Christ did not appear to Thomas, for his satisfaction, till he found him with the rest of his disciples. Christ came in among them, and stood in the midst, and they all knew him, for he showed himself as he had showed himself before, still the same. See the condescension of our Lord Jesus! He saluted them all as he had done before; he said, Peace be unto you. This was no vain repetition, but significant of the abundant and assured peace which Christ gives, and of the continuance of his blessings upon his people, for they fail not, but are new every morning, new every meeting.

Christ singled Thomas from the rest, and told him to satisfy his curiosity to the utmost. Here we have,

1. A rebuke of Thomas's unbelief, in the plain reference to what Thomas had said. There is not an unbelieving word in our tongues, nor thought in our minds,

at any time, but it is known to the Lord Jesus, Ps. 78. 21.

2. A condescension to his weakness. Great spirits will not be dictated to by their inferiors, especially in their acts of grace; yet Christ is pleased here to accommodate himself even to Thomas, rather than leave him in his unbelief. We ought thus to bear the infirmities of the weak, Rom. 15. 1, 2. He suffers his wounds to be examined. Thus, for the confirmation of our faith, he hath instituted an ordinance on purpose to keep his death in remembrance, though it was an ignominious, shameful death. Because it was such an evidence of his love, as would be an encouragement to our faith, he appoints the memorial of it to be celebrated. And in that ordinance, wherein we show the Lord's death, we are called, as it were, to put our finger into the print of the nails. Reach hither thy hand to Him, who reacheth forth his helping, inviting, giving hand to thee.

It is an affecting word with which Christ closes up what he had to say to Thomas, Do not thou become an unbeliever; as if he would have been sealed up under unbelief, had he not yielded now. This warning is given to us all, Be not faithless; for, if we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless. Let us therefore say, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

Thomas is now ashamed of his unbelief, and cries out, My Lord and my God. We are not told whether he did put his finger into the print of the nails; it should seem he did not, for Christ says, Thou hast seen, and believed; seeing sufficed. He therefore believed him to be Lord and God, and we are to believe him to be so. We must believe his Deity—that he is God; not a man made God, but God made man. We must believe his mediation—that he is Lord, the one Lord, 1 Cor. 8. 6; 1 Tim. 2. 5.

Thomas consented to him as his Lord and his God. In faith there must be consent of the will to gospel terms, as well as assent of the understanding to gospel truths. We must accept of Christ to be that to us, which the Father hath appointed him. This is the vital act of faith, He is mine, Cant. 2. 16. He made an open profession of this, before those who had been witnesses of his unbelieving doubts. He speaks with ardency of affection as one that took hold of Christ

with all his might, My Lord and my God.

Christ owns Thomas a believer. Sound and sincere believers, though slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. He upbraids him with his former unbelief. He might well be ashamed to think he had been so backward to believe, and came so slowly to his own comforts. If this must be the only method of proof, how must the world be converted to the faith of Christ! He is therefore justly blamed for laying so much stress upon this. He commends the faith of those who believe upon easier terms. Thomas, as a believer, was truly blessed; but rather blessed are they who have not seen. It is not meant of not seeing the objects of faith, for these are invisible, Heb. 11. 1; 2 Cor. 4. 18, but the motives of faith—Christ's miracles, and especially his resurrection: blessed are they that see not these, and yet believe in Christ.

It is a greater instance of the power of Divine grace. The less sensible evidence is, the more the work of faith appears to be the Lord's doing. We have not, indeed, that kind of proof with which Thomas was favoured, but we have abundant evidence of the Redeemer's resurrection and glory. And the rapid progress of christianity, an effect which could be ascribed to no power but that of God, and the continuance of so holy and humbling a religion to the present day, form a full demonstration to us of this important fact; nor has any event, since the beginning of the world, been proved with such complicated and abundant evidence. It is the duty of those who read and hear the gospel, to believe, to embrace the doctrine of Christ, and that record concerning him, 1 John 5. 11.

23. This address of Thomas, though in the form of an exclamation, can only be regarded as a confession of faith, and was equivalent to a direct assertion of our Saviour's divinity.—*Middleton*. Any deviation from the common acceptation is contrary to the ordinary use of language. It cannot, on any principle of rational interpretation or common sense, be identified with any paraphrase contrary thereto. The combination of the two sacred names forms the strongest representation of Divine Majesty. Nor may we forget that it was spoken under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.—*See J. P. Smith*. It was a plain recognition of the Divine nature of our Lord.

§ 157. Ver. 30, 31. Conclusion.

There were other signs and evidences of our Lord's resurrection, far more than it was necessary to record, but these were

committed to writing, that all who should ever read them, might believe that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, the Saviour of sinners, and the Son of God; that, by this faith, they might obtain eternal life, through his name, for his sake, and by his mercy, truth, and power. May we believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing, may we have life through his name. Greater advantage there cannot be than that which is offered by the words of this life,

the gospel is called, Acts 5. 20. It includes both spiritual life, in conformity to God and communion with him, and eternal life, in the sight and enjoyment of him. Both are through Christ's name, by his merit and power, and both are sure to all true believers.

Faith is a long-sighted, and a clear-sighted grace of the soul; while that wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God, sees no beauty in God's crucified Son why it should desire him, faith beholds such a light from heaven poured upon him, upon the glory of his person, and the mighty work of his salvation, as sheds comparative dimness upon every other object. Nothing can hinder the believer, who is saved by grace through faith, from clinging with all his soul's hope to the amazing atonement of the cross, and regarding it as infinitely precious. Nor can any sense of sin, or imperfection in the christian, when once the Holy Ghost hath taught him to realize the nature and grace of his Lord, dissuade or prevent him from receiving the assurance of that blessed record, that God hath given to sinners eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—(2.)

## •CHAPTER XXI.

§ 153. Ver. 1—14. *Christ appears to his disciples while they are fishing.*

Christ has many ways of making himself known to his people; usually in his ordinances, but sometimes by his Spirit he visits them when they are employed in their business. As to the particulars of this history, we may observe,

I. Christ now showed himself to seven apostles. It is good for the disciples of Christ to be together; not only in solemn religious assemblies, but in common conversation, and about common business. Christians should edify one another both by discourse and example.

II. Observe their agreement to go a fishing. They were not yet appointed to preach the resurrection of Christ. The hour for entering upon action was not come. They would help to maintain themselves, and not be burdensome to any. This teaches us, with quietness to work, and eat our own bread. That night they caught nothing. See the vanity of this world; the hand of the diligent often returns empty. Even good men may come short of desired success in their honest undertakings. We may be in the way of our duty, and yet not prosper. It was also an emblem of the discouragements which the most able, faithful, and laborious ministers often meet with.

III. Notice after what manner Christ made himself known to them. He showed himself to them seasonably, after a fruitless night's toil. Christ's time of making himself known to his people, is when they are most at a loss. He showed himself to them by an instance of his pity. He speaks unto them as unto his sons, with the care and tenderness of a father. The question is very kind, Have ye any meat? He asks as a tender Father concerning his children, whether they are provided with what is fit for them; that, if they are not, he may take care for their supply. Christ takes cognizance of the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. He has herein set us an example of compassionate concern for our brethren. Christ put the question to them, not because he did not know their wants; but he would know them from themselves. Those who would have supplies from Christ, must own themselves empty and needy.

He from whom nothing is hid, no, not the inhabitants under the waters, Job 26. 5, knew on which side of the ship the shoal of fishes was. Divine Providence extends itself to things most minute and contingent; and those are happy who acknowledge it in all their ways.

As yet they knew not that it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised, and took this supposed stranger's counsel. In being thus observant of strangers, they were obedient to their Master, unawares. Those who are humble, diligent, and patient, though their labours may be crossed, shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles

and fruitless attempts. There is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders. Those are likely to speed well that follow the rule of the word, the guidance of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for this is casting the net on the right side of the ship.

The draught of fishes may be considered, 1. As a miracle in itself; and so it was designed, to prove that Jesus Christ was raised in power, although sown in weakness. Christ manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things, which they looked not for. 2. As a mercy to them; for the seasonable and abundant supply of their necessities. He would take care that those who had left all for him, should not want any good thing. 3. As the memorial of a former mercy. Latter favours are designed to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten. 4. As a mystery, and very significant of that work to which Christ was now with an enlarged commission sending them forth. They themselves, in pursuance of their former mission, when first made fishers of men, had small success in comparison with what they should now have. It is encouragement to Christ's ministers to continued diligence in their work. One happy draught, at length, may be sufficient to repay many years' toil at the gospel net.

IV. Observe how the disciples received this discovery which Christ made of himself, ver. 7, 8. We find that John was the most intelligent and quicksighted disciple. He whom Jesus loved, was the first that said, It is the Lord. John had adhered most closely to his Master in his sufferings; and has more discernment than any of them.

Peter was the most zealous, for as soon as he heard it was the Lord, he threw himself into the sea, that he might reach Christ the first. Here we may observe, how variously God dispenses his gifts, and what difference there may be between some real believers and others in the way of their honouring Christ, yet both may be accepted of him. Peter ought not to be censured for casting himself into the sea, but commended for his zeal and the strength of his affection. But others continue in the ship, drag the net, and bring the fish to shore, and such persons ought not to be censured as worldly; for they, in their places, are as

truly serving Christ as the others. If all the disciples had done as Peter did, what had become of their fish and their nets? And yet if Peter had done as the others did, we had wanted this instance of holy zeal. Christ was well pleased with both.

V. The Lord Jesus had provision ready for them. After they had secured the fishes, Jesus called them to partake of the repast. In his usual manner, he took the provisions, and gave unto them, but they ventured not to ask who he was, being satisfied it was the Lord. This is noted as the third time he showed himself to his disciples since his resurrection. It does not become us to inquire where or how he was engaged during the rest of his time, previously to his ascension.

We need not be curious in inquiring whence this fire, and fish, and bread came; but we may be comforted in this instance of Christ's care of his disciples. He kindly provided for those fishermen, when they came weary from their work; for verily they shall be fed who trust in the Lord and do good. He called for some of the fish they had caught. He would have them taste the gifts of his miraculous bounty, that they might be witnesses both of his power and of his goodness.

Observe who was most active in landing the fishes; it was Peter; who had shown a more zealous affection to his Master's person, and in this showed a more ready obedience to his Master's command.

Although there were so many, and such great fishes too, yet the net was not broken; so that they lost none of their fish, nor damaged their net. The net of the gospel has inclosed multitudes, three thousand in one day, yet it is not broken; it is still as mighty as ever to bring souls to God.

Christ himself began to eat. Though having a glorified body, he needed not food, yet he would show that he had a true body, which was capable of eating. The apostles produced this as one proof of his resurrection, that they had eaten and drunk with him, Acts 10. 41.

It is good to keep account of Christ's gracious visits; for he keeps account of them, and they will be remembered against us if we walk unworthily of them.

This is now "the third;" have we made due improvement of the first and second? See 2 Cor. 12. 14. "This is the third," perhaps it may be the last.

7. By Peter's fisher's coat, is meant an upper

linen tunic, worn between the garment next the body and the cloak, a sort of frock reaching to the knees, and girt round the body with a belt.

9. There is no doubt the fire and wood were provided miraculously by Christ, as he had just before caused the miraculous draught of fishes.—*Bloomfield.*

§ 153. Ver. 15-19. *Christ's discourse with Peter.*

We may suppose Peter full of doubts upon what terms he stood with his Master. At length, Christ said what he had to say to him. He discoursed with him, not as with a criminal, but as a friend. Peter had reproached himself, and therefore Christ did not reproach him.

But the case of Peter required marked notice. Our Lord now addressed him by his original name, as if he had forfeited that of Peter through his instability; Lovest thou me more than these—better than thy fellow-disciples, thy intimate friends, relatives, and companions? Peter's answer determines the meaning. He had, before his fall, boasted that though all men were offended, yet he would not be so. He now answered, Thou knowest that I love thee; but without professing to love Jesus more than others. Our Lord renewed his appointment to the ministerial office, commanding him to feed his lambs, even the least of his flock. This reminded Peter, that his late experience of his own weakness ought to render him peculiarly compassionate and attentive to the meanest and feeblest believers. We must not reckon it an affront to have our sincerity questioned, when we ourselves have done that which makes it questionable.

Soon after our Lord repeated his question, and when Peter had again appealed to him that he knew he really loved him. Jesus told him to show that love by feeding his lambs, by diligently labouring to promote the edification of every description of believer, as well as to spread the knowledge of his salvation. As Peter thrice denied Christ, so Christ was pleased to repeat the question a third time. This grieved Peter. Every remembrance of past sins, even pardoned sins, renews the sorrow of a true penitent. Conscious of integrity, he more solemnly appealed to Christ, as knowing all things, even the secrets of his heart, that his love was sincere, notwithstanding his late behaviour. Our Lord allowed this by renewing the charge to Peter to feed his sheep.

It is well when our falls and mistakes render us more humble and watchful.

Our Lord will pardon the sins of his believing servants, but he will rebuke them, that they may know how greatly he abhors their offences, notwithstanding his mercy to their souls.

The sincerity of our love to God must at length be brought to the test; and it behoves us to inquire seriously, and with earnest, persevering prayer to the heart-searching God, to examine and prove us, whether we are able to stand this test. He says to us in his word, as certainly as he did to Peter, Lovest thou me? and the same will be the subject of inquiry at the solemn day of judgment. Those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, have a consciousness of it notwithstanding all their defects; and as He knoweth all things, and especially whether they love him or not, they will apply to him to determine the question, and to enable them to love him more and more. Obedience is the general evidence of our love to Jesus, and endeavours to be useful, even to the meanest of his flock, he requires of every one. No one, therefore, can be qualified to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, who does not love the good Shepherd more than any earthly advantage or object.

Christ having confirmed to Peter the honour of an apostle, tells him of his martyrdom. As Christ foresaw all his own sufferings, so he foresaw the sufferings of all his followers, and foretold them, though not in particular, as he did to Peter, yet in general, that they must take up their cross. He foretells particularly that Peter should die a violent death, by the hands of an executioner. The stretching out his hands, some think, points at the manner of his death by crucifying; and the tradition of the ancients informs us that Peter was crucified at Rome. This prediction, though pointing chiefly at his death, was to have its accomplishment in his previous sufferings. No more is implied here in his being carried whither he would not, than that he should be carried to a violent death. He that puts on the christian, does not put off the man. Christ himself prayed against the bitter cup. A natural aversion to pain and death is quite reconcilable with a holy submission to the will of God in both.

He compares this with Peter's former liberty. Where trouble comes, we are apt to aggravate it with this, that it has been otherwise. But we may reason with

ourselves, How many years of prosperity have I enjoyed more than I deserved and improved! And, having received good, shall not I receive evil also?

Christ tells Peter he should suffer thus in his old age. God would shelter him from the rage of his enemies till he should come to be old, that he might be made ~~strong~~ for sufferings, and the church might longer enjoy his services.

This spake he to Peter, signifying by what death he should glorify God. It is the great concern of every good man, whatever death he dies, to glorify God in it; what is our chief end but this, to die to the Lord, at the word of the Lord? The death of the martyrs was in a special manner for the glorifying of God. It was, also to excite Peter to, and encourage him in faithfulness and diligence in his work as an apostle. He had bid him feed his sheep; and let him set his Master before him as an example.

15. The word rendered "feed," used by our Lord the first and third time, signifies to feed, or provide with pasture; the second, to tend as a shepherd.

"Lambs" signify the less advanced disciples, whether young or old; "sheep" the more experienced Christians.

18. *Lampe* shows there is here an allusion to a custom at Rome, where those about to be crucified had their hands stretched out and fastened to a yoke, which was placed on their necks, and when they had thus been led about the city, they were fastened to the cross. The general tradition of the ancient Christians is, that Peter was crucified at Rome.

*A. Clarke* observes that it is not sufficient to offer the bread of life to the congregation of the Lord, but the shepherd must take care the sheep are properly collected, attended to, guided, &c.

§ 153. Ver. 19—24. *Christ's declaration concerning John.*

Jesus next called upon Peter to signify his readiness to adhere to his cause, even to death, by rising up and following him. This Peter did without hesitation.

Sufferings, pain, and death, will appear formidable even to the most experienced Christian; but in the hope to glorify God, to leave a sinful world, and to be present with his Lord, he becomes ready to obey the Redeemer's call, and to follow Him through death to glory: the more love he has experienced, the more ready he will be to follow the steps of Christ.

Turning round, Peter saw John, also, without any special command, silently expressing by his conduct the same willingness to suffer for his Lord. To Peter's inquiry, What shall this man do? our Lord answered, by telling Peter not to

indulge vain curiosity, but to follow him. Most probably Jesus meant his coming to execute vengeance on the Jewish nation; but the disciples had a confused idea that Christ meant John should live till his coming to judge the world, or that he would be translated to heaven. The words had no such meaning. John lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem; he survived the other apostles, and then died in old age.

Curiosity frequently interrupts us in our course; a thousand questions are started and discussed, about which Jesus as it were says to us, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." If we attend to this voice, death itself will be gain to us; we shall be ready for our Lord's coming; and while here we must live by faith in the sure testimony of his word, which never fails those who trust in it.

It is the will of Christ that his disciples should mind their own present duty, and not be curious in their inquiries about future events, concerning either themselves or others. There are many things we are apt to be anxious about, which are nothing to us. Other people's affairs are nothing to us, to intermeddle in; we must quietly work, and mind our own business. Many nice and curious questions are put concerning the counsels of God, and the state of the invisible world, concerning which we may say, What is this to us? What do you think will become of such a one? is a common question, which may easily be answered with another; What is that to me? to his own Master he stands or falls. What is it to us to know the times and the seasons? Secret things belong not to us. The great matter that is all in all to us, is duty, and not events; for duty is ours, events are God's: our own duty, and not another's; for every one shall bear his own burden: our present duty, and not the duty of the time to come; for sufficient to the day shall be the directions thereof. Now all our duty is summed up in this one, of following Christ. And if we closely attend to the duty of following Christ, we shall find neither heart nor time to meddle with that which does not belong to us. Hence learn the uncertainty of human tradition, and the folly of building our faith upon it. Here was a tradition, an apostolical tradition, a saying that went abroad among the brethren; it was early, it was common, it was public, and yet it

was false ! How little then are any unwritten traditions to be relied upon ! Here was a traditional exposition of scripture ; no new saying of Christ's advanced, but only a construction put by the brethren upon what he did really say, and yet it was a misconstruction. Let the scripture be its own interpreter, and explain itself ; as it is, in a great measure, its own evidence, and proves itself, for it is light.

See the easy rectifying such mistakes by adhering to the word of Christ. So the evangelist here corrects and controls that saying among the brethren, by repeating the very words of Christ. Let them speak for themselves, and let no sense be put upon them but what is genuine and natural ; and in that let us agree. The best end of men's controversies would be, to keep to the express words of scripture, and speak, as well as think, according to that word, Isa. 8. 20. Scripture language is the safest and most proper vehicle of scripture truth: the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. 2. 13. Those who cannot agree in the same terms of art, and their application, may agree in the same scripture terms, and may agree to love one another.

22. The words, "Till I come," doubtless referred to the judgment which has taken place on the Jewish nation, and was a prediction that John would live till after that period, as was the case. The disciples then only having in view our Lord's advent to judgment, misunderstood the words, as the evangelist himself indicates.

A Clarke thinks that our Lord was then taking Peter aside, and the latter seeing John following them, wished to know whether he should come; and our Lord's answer intimated John should remain till they came to him.

§ 157. Ver. 25. *The conclusion.*

We are here told that the beloved disciple, John, was the writer of this gospel. The penman of this history was a disciple, a beloved disciple, one who had leaned on Christ's breast, who had himself heard his sermons and conferences, had seen his miracles, and the proofs of his resurrection. This is he who testifies what he was well assured of.

It is added, that the actions of Jesus worthy of observation, were exceedingly more numerous, and that but a small part had been committed to writing. The concluding words are generally considered as a figurative mode of expression ; but perhaps they also intimate, that if every one of the actions and words of Jesus had

been written, the books would have been so many, and so large, as to counteract their own intention ; for men would not be able, in the present state of the world, to study or remember them. Let us bless God for all that is written in the scriptures, and be thankful that they comprehend so much in so small a space. It would not suit our engagements in this life, or our capacities, to have a more copious revelation, and we want no human additions. The truth of the gospel comes confirmed by all the evidence we can desire or expect. The matter of fact that Jesus preached such doctrines, and worked such miracles, and rose from the dead, is proved beyond contradiction, by such evidence as is always admitted in other cases, therefore to the satisfaction of all who are impartial ; then let the doctrine recommend itself, and let the miracles prove it to be of God.

Enough is recorded to direct our faith, and regulate our practice ; more would have been unnecessary.—(75.)

Much is overlooked of what is written, much forgotten, and much made the matter of doubtful disputation. This would have been the case much more, if there had been such a world of books of equal authority and necessity as the whole history would have swelled to ; especially since it was requisite, that what was written, should be meditated upon and expounded, for which God has thought fit to leave room. We may, however, anticipate in our minds, the joy we shall receive in heaven from a more complete knowledge of all Jesus did and said, as well as of the conduct of his providence and grace in his dealings with each of us. May this be our happiness !

Thus end the records of the great transaction of man's redemption, which it was foreseen would be necessary before the foundation of the world ; and the plan of which was discovered to several pious persons in different ages of the world, that they might represent the several circumstances which would attend it, thereby enabling those who should live in the time of its accomplishment to discover who was the true Messiah.—(68.)

THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD ; AND THAT BELIEVING YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME, ch. 20. 31.



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THIS book connects the Gospels with the Epistles; being a useful postscript to the former, and a proper introduction to the latter. It contains many particulars concerning the apostles Peter and Paul, and of the christian church, from the ascension of our Saviour to the arrival of St. Paul at Rome, a period of about thirty years.

St. Luke indisputably was the writer of this book; he was present at many of the transactions he relates, and attended Paul to Rome. It is supposed to have been written about A. D. 63; and all the early christian fathers bear testimony to its genuineness and authenticity, which never were, in any respect, disputed, excepting by some of the early heretics, whose unsupported assertions in reality afford a decisive testimony in its favour.

Luke's narrative does not afford a complete history of the church during the period to which it refers, nor even of St. Paul's life. The object of the book has been considered to be, 1. To relate in what manner the gifts of the Holy Spirit were communicated on the day of Pentecost, and the subsequent miracles performed by the apostles, confirmatory of the truth of christianity, as showing that Christ's declarations were really fulfilled. 2. To deliver accounts proving the claim of the Gentiles to be admitted into the church of Christ, which was then disputed by the Jews. This is shown by much of the contents of the book.

The events related in the Acts are wholly recorded without dates, but some facts connected with general history are mentioned, the dates of which are known, and assist in ascertaining the chronology of the book, a table of which is added to the present Commentary; also a map, which will be found useful for reference while this book is studied.

A large portion of the Acts is occupied by the discourses or sermons of various persons, the language and manner of which differ, and all of which will be found characteristic of the individuals by whom they were delivered, and the occasion on which they were spoken. It seems that most of these discourses are only the substance of what was actually delivered.

The Acts of the Apostles are invaluable as supplying evidence of the truth and Divine origin of the christian religion, showing that the gospel did not succeed by deceit or fraud, but wholly through the mighty power of God, and the excellency and efficacy of the saving truths it contains. The doctrines set forth in the Acts, are perfectly in unison with the glorious truths revealed in the Gospels, and illustrated by the Epistles; and the evidences given by the apostles in their miracles and appeals to prophecy, are fully adapted to every class of persons.

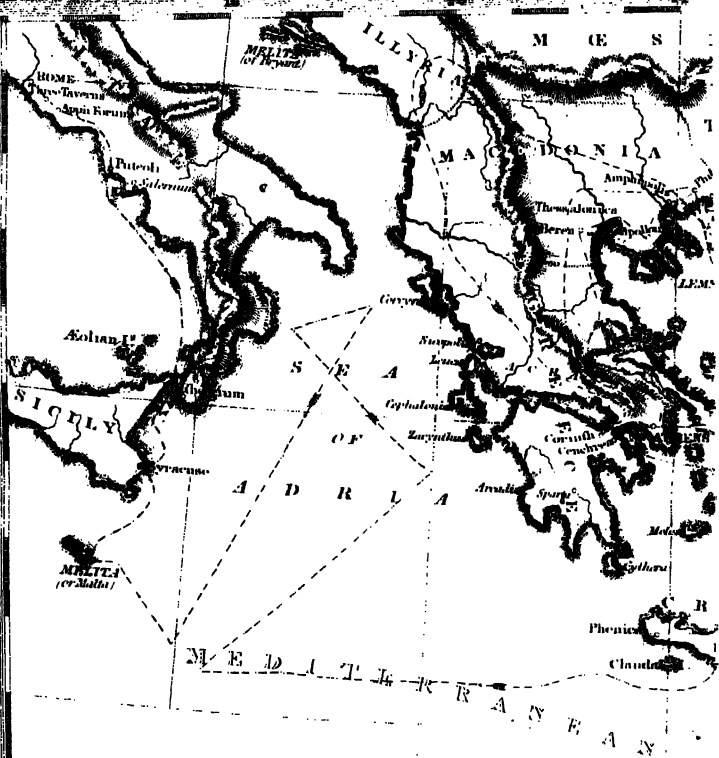
The narrative is that of an eye-witness or companion of the persons concerned in the events related. It is honest and impartial: weaknesses and faults are recorded, as well as circumstances creditable to the parties. Several passages in the epistles harmonize with facts related in this history; and they mutually illustrate each other, as is very fully and ably shown by *Paley*, who observes, that the Acts do not purport to exhibit regular annals of St. Paul's life, so that "in comparing the history with the epistles, we shall not be surprised by the discovery of omissions; we shall ascribe it to truth that there are no contradictions." Without the book of Acts neither the gospels nor the epistles could have been so clearly understood as by its aid; and the gospels close with reference to events recorded in the commencement of the Acts. It may further be observed, that the incidental circumstances narrated in the book of Acts, or what may be called its internal evidences, present indisputable proof of authenticity. For many reasons we are justly authorized in concluding, that if any history of former times deserves credit, the Acts of the apostles ought to be received and credited; while we cannot but observe that the doctrines set forth therein, are most excellent in themselves, most admirably adapted for the fallen state of man, and attended with so many miraculous and Divine testimonies, as to bear all possible marks of a true revelation.

The proofs of Christ's resurrection, with which the gospels close, are here abundantly corroborated, not only by the constant and undaunted testimony of those who conversed with our Lord after he rose, but by the working of the Spirit with that testimony, for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ, according to the word of Christ, that his resurrection should be the most convincing proof of his Divine mission. Christ told his disciples that they should be his witnesses, and this book brings them in witnessing for him; that they should be fishers of men, and here we have them inclosing multitudes in the gospel-net; that they should be the lights of the world, and here we have the world enlightened by them. Christ's predictions of the persecutions with which the preachers of his gospel should be afflicted, we here see abundantly fulfilled, and also the assurances he gave them of extraordinary supports and comforts under their sufferings.

As we are not to regard the book of Acts in the light of a regular history, neither are we to expect from it a complete body of christian doctrine; but it gives the facts which formed the basis of evidence for those principles, or which were examples of their diffusion and influence amongst men. It evinces the propriety and Divine warrant of communicating the gospel to the Gentiles, and is an authentic testimony to the manner in which christianity was introduced, and made its way among mankind, not by any worldly power or inducement, but solely by its own evidences and influences. *Bickersteth* observes, The Acts especially are full of invaluable instruction to the missionary, even more than would at first sight be supposed.

The discourses in this book all point to one or more of the following objects:—That Jesus was the Messiah foretold and described in the ancient scriptures—To show that all the gifts of heavenly grace and mercy, are conferred upon mankind through the mediation of Jesus as the Christ—





## VOYAGES & TRAVELS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### EXPLANATION

- 1<sup>st</sup> To and from Jerusalem to Damascus, and into Arabia *Acts II*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> From Jerusalem to Tarsus, and return thence, Antioch to Jerusalem *Acts III*
- 3<sup>d</sup> From Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria, and thence to Cyprus, Antioch in Paphos, and return thence Antioch in Syria, to Jerusalem *Acts VII*
- 4<sup>th</sup> From Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria, and thence Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and return to Jerusalem thence Corne *Acts XII*
- 5<sup>th</sup> From Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria & thence Cappadocia, Galatia, Phrygia, and thence Macedonia, Myra & return to Jerusalem, thence Tarsus to Corne *Acts XVI*
- 6<sup>th</sup> Voyage from Corne to Crete, Melita, Syracuse and finally to Puteoli, from whence he went to Rome *Acts XXVII*





The rights of Gentile christians, and their freedom from the peculiarities of Judaism—The accountability of men to God for their conduct, and especially for the manner in which they treat the gospel testimony.

The following testimonies are afforded in this book to the Person and Characters of Jesus the Christ. 1. That Christ is really and truly a man, yet powers and actions are attributed to him, of which mere human, or any created nature is wholly incapable. 2. He is stated to be the Author and Cause of all spiritual blessings. 3. The miracles wrought by the apostles are attributed to the efficient power of Christ. 4. The influences of the Holy Spirit are ascribed to the efficient agency of Christ. 5. He is represented as the future and universal Judge. 6. The institutions of religious instruction and worship, and the means of diffusing and preserving christianity, are referred to Christ as their Founder and Director, their immediate Object, and the Author of their success. 7. The term, Lord, expressly used to denote the supreme Being, is understood of the Lord Jesus Christ. 8. The term, The Name of the Lord, in scripture, denotes the revealed perfections and character of God, and we find marks of a similar exalted regard applied to the name of Christ. 9. The first christians are described as paying religious worship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this as a known and acknowledged characteristic of their profession.—(5. 33. 55. 69. 95.)

## CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1—5. *Proofs of Christ's resurrection.*

The evangelist Luke begins this history by referring his pious friend to his gospel. He had therein given some account of the miracles, actions, and doctrines of Christ, from his birth till his ascension into heaven. The truth of Christ's resurrection is particularly dwelt upon. The proofs were infallible—"plain indications," both that he was alive, and that it was he himself. They were many, and often repeated, so that all the sorrow of the disciples for his departure was done away.

Our Lord instructed them concerning the work they were to do. He breathed upon them, and bade them receive the Holy Ghost, and opened their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures, John 20. 22; Luke 24. 45. It is also observed, that Jesus conversed with his disciples concerning the kingdom of God, about to be set up on the earth, by the preaching of his gospel. Much probably passed which is not particularly recorded.

The apostles assembled at Jerusalem, by Christ's command, he having ordered them not to depart thence, but to wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which he had promised to send, John 14. 17. This would fully answer what he had testified concerning him, that he would be a baptism by the Holy Ghost, communicating to them miraculous powers, and more abundantly enlightening and sanctifying their souls. This took place ten days after our Lord's ascension. The Spirit was given by promise, and it was at this time the great promise, as that of the Messiah was before, Luke 1. 72, and that of eternal life is now, 1 John 2. 25. The Spirit of God is not given as the

spirit of man is given us, and formed within us, by the course of nature, Zech. 12. 1, but by the word of God. It was the promise of the Father. He will give the Spirit, as the Father of lights, as the Father of spirits, and as the Father of mercies; it is the promise of the Father. And this promise of the Father they had heard from Christ.

This confirms the Divine promise, and encourages us to depend upon it, that we have heard it from Jesus Christ; for in him all the promises of God are yea, and amen.

3. Proofs of such a nature, and connected with such circumstances, as to render them indubitable. This is the import of the original word.

Ver. 6—11. *Christ's ascension.*

Notwithstanding all Jesus had taught them, the disciples still entertained some thoughts of a temporal kingdom. They thought Christ would make the nation of the Jews great and considerable among the nations; but Christ came to set up a kingdom of heaven, not an earthly kingdom. See how apt we are to misunderstand scripture; to understand that literally which is spoken figuratively, to expound scripture by our schemes, whereas we ought to form our schemes by the scriptures. But when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, our mistakes will be removed, as those of the apostles were soon after.

They were inquisitive into that which their Master never had directed or encouraged them to inquire into. They were impatient for the setting up that kingdom in which they promised themselves so great a share. Whereas he that believeth, doth not make haste, but he is satisfied that God's time is the best time. Our Lord knew that his ascension and the teaching of the Holy Spirit would

soon terminate these expectations, and therefore only checked their vain curiosity as to the time.

Our Lord gave them a rebuke, which is a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of any inordinate desire of forbidden knowledge, and intruding into things which we have not seen, because God has not shown. He had given his disciples instructions sufficient for the discharge of their duty, both before his death and since his resurrection, and this knowledge is enough for a christian. He had given signs of the times, which it was their duty to observe, and a sin to overlook, Matt. 24. 33; 16. 3. But they must not expect or desire to know the particulars of future events, or the exact times of them. It is good for us to be left at uncertainty respecting the times and moments of future events concerning the church, as well as concerning ourselves. This knowledge is reserved to God as his prerogative; it is hid with him.

He points out their work, and with authority assures them of ability to go on with it, and of success, ver. 8. It is enough that he has engaged to give believers strength equal to their trials and services; that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may, in one way or other, be witnesses for Christ on earth, while in heaven he manages their concerns with perfect wisdom, truth, and love.

Ye shall be witnesses for Christ. 1. In Jerusalem; there ye must begin, many will receive your testimony; and those that do not, will be inexcusable. 2. Your light shall from thence shine through all Judea, where before ye have laboured in vain. 3. Thence ye shall proceed to Samaria, though at your first mission this was forbidden. 4. Your usefulness shall reach the uttermost part of the earth, ye shall be blessings to the whole world.

Having left these instructions with them Christ was gradually taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. They saw him go up towards heaven, and had actually their eyes upon him, with so much care and intentness of mind, that they could not be deceived.

While they looked earnestly after him, with mixed feelings of astonishment and regret, perhaps with some expectation of his immediate return, two angels, in the form of men, demanded why they gazed after their ascended Lord, and told them of his second coming.

This same Jesus shall come again in his own person, clothed with this glorious body; this same Jesus, who came once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, will appear a second time without sin. He who came once in disgrace to be judged, will come again in glory to judge. The same Jesus, who has given you a charge, will come again to call you to give account, how you have performed your trust. He shall come in like manner. He is gone in a cloud, attended with angels; behold, he comes in the clouds, and with him an innumerable company of angels! Ye have now lost the sight of him in the clouds and in the air; whither he is gone ye cannot follow now; but then ye shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. When we stand gazing and trifling, the consideration of our Master's second coming should quicken and awaken us: when we stand gazing and trembling, the consideration should comfort and encourage us. May our expectation of it be steadfast and joyful, by giving diligence to be found of him without spot and blameless!

The attention and hope of christians are now directed to the second appearance of their Saviour. The ancient church looked for his coming in the flesh; we, according to his promise, look for his coming in glory. How alarming will be the sight, how mortifying the homage which every knee must render will be to infidels and blasphemers of his gospel, to the enemies of his grace, to the despisers of his institutions, to the transgressors of his laws! Professed disciples of the Son of man, are you prepared to go forth and meet Him? To which class of mankind do you belong? To that which, standing at his right hand, shall be invited into his kingdom, or that which being ranged on the left, shall be condemned to everlasting woe? Ask your consciences the important question, and call in the assistance of the infallible word by which we shall be judged. Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. Happy are they who can say, with holy and earnest desire, Even so, come Lord Jesus.—(79.)

6. The Jews in our Saviour's time believed the Roman empire to be the fourth kingdom predicted by Daniel, and that it should be destroyed by the Messiah after he was come, and then the kingdom be restored to Israel. Whence this question of the apostles to our Saviour.—*Mede.*

Ver. 12—14. *The apostles unite in prayer.*

We are here told, that Christ ascended from the mount of Olives. There he began his sufferings, and there he rolled away the reproach of them by his glorious ascension. It is prophesied of him, Zech. 14. 4, that his feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem, according to their Master's appointment, though they there were in the midst of enemies. God can find out hiding-places for his people. Nothing can be determined with certainty concerning the upper room in which the apostles and disciples assembled. The eleven apostles are here named, so is Mary, the mother of our Lord, and it is the last time that any mention is made of her in the scriptures, and it is in a very cursory manner, as one of the company who joined in prayer, but without any peculiar distinction, or the least appearance of exercising authority over the apostles, or even of counselling them.

Observe, they prayed, and made supplication. All God's people are praying people. It was now a time of trouble and danger with the disciples of Christ; and, Is any afflicted? let him pray; that will silence cares and fears. They had now a great work to do, and before they entered upon it, they were instant in prayer to God for his presence with them in it. They were waiting for the descent of the Spirit upon them, and therefore abounded in prayer. Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings, who are in a praying frame. Christ had promised shortly to send the Holy Ghost; that promise was not to supersede prayer, but to quicken and encourage it. God will be inquired of for promised mercies, and the nearer the performance seems to be, the more earnest we should be in prayer for it. They continued in prayer, and were long in prayer. They continued in prayer and supplication; in seeking God, we give him the glory of the mercy and grace which we have found in him. They did this with one accord, in holy love, there was no discord among them; and those who keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, are best prepared to receive the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

A little company united in love, exemplary in their conduct, fervent in prayer, and prudently zealous to promote the cause of Christ by every means in their power generally will rapidly increase.

12. A sabbath day's journey was 2000 cubits, or about a mile; it was the space between the Jewish camp and the tabernacle, and was the distance they had to go on that day to their place of worship. See note Luke 24. 50.

13. Upper room, see note ch. 20. 8. Ancient tradition relates that it was the same room wherein the last supper was instituted.

Ver. 15—26. *Matthias chosen in the place of Judas.*

The whole number of disciples at this time assembled was 120, though we may conclude that others believed on Christ in different parts of the land, 1 Cor. 15. 6. While uniting together in constant prayer, Peter, doubtless by Divine admonition, proposed to appoint another apostle in the place of the traitor Judas. He reminded them of the fulfilment of the Divine word concerning Judas, and that they ought not to be disconcerted thereby. For though Judas had been numbered as an apostle, he deserved his doom, having been guide to them that took Jesus. And all that he got as the wages of his iniquity had only served to purchase a field; which he is said to have purchased, as it was bought with his wages of unrighteousness. Having hanged himself in despair, he fell down and burst asunder. The historian here adds to the words of the apostle, that this event was known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; and the field bought with the price of the blood of Jesus, and which cost Judas his life, was in consequence called the field of blood.

The apostle proceeded to show that the same scriptures pointed out what their present conduct should be—to set apart one that had attended on Jesus with them, from the beginning, to be a witness with them of his resurrection. His bishopric, or his office, for so the word signifies in general, shall another take, which is quoted from Ps. 109. 8. The great thing which the apostles were to attest to the world, was, Christ's resurrection, for that was the great proof of his being the Messiah, and the foundation of our hope in him. The apostles were ordained, not to secular dignity and dominion, but to preach Christ, and the power of his resurrection. The other apostles and disciples perceived the propriety of Peter's counsel, they selected two persons for this important service, and referred the decision to the Lord's determination. These two did not propose themselves, nor strive for the place, but humbly sat still, and were appointed unto it.



That this prayer was addressed to Christ, appears from the consideration that the choice and mission of an apostle was requisite to be personally and especially his act, as the Head and Lord of the new dispensation; and there strongly appears an allusion to the recent and memorable occasions on which Christ had shown his knowledge of Peter's heart.—(95.)

An appeal was made to God as the Searcher of hearts; Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, which we do not, and better than they know their own. It is comfortable to us, in our prayers for the welfare of the church and its ministers, that the God we pray to knows the hearts of all men, and turns them which way soever he will; he can make them fit for his purpose, if he do not find them so, by giving them another spirit. They desire to know which of these God had chosen. Lord, show us that, and we are satisfied. It is fit that God should choose his own servants; and so far as he, any way, by the disposals of his providence, or the gifts of his Spirit, shows whom he hath chosen, or what he hath chosen for us, we ought to comply with him. They are ready to receive him as a brother, whom God hath chosen, desiring to have one to take part of this ministry and apostleship, to join in the work, and share in the honour, from which Judas by transgression fell. He threw himself, by deserting and betraying his Master, from the place of an apostle, of which he was unworthy, that he might go to his own place, the place of a traitor, the fittest place for him—to hell, that was his own place. Those who betray Christ, as they fall from the dignity of relation to him, so they fall into all misery. Whitby quotes Ignatius' saying, There is appointed to every man "a proper place," which speaks the same with that of God's rendering to every man according to his works. And our Saviour has said, that Judas' own place should be such, that it had been better for him that he had never been born, Matt. 26. 24; his misery was such as to be worse than not being. Judas had been a hypocrite, and hell is the proper place of such.

In answer to this appeal the Lord was pleased to direct the lot to fall upon Matthias; and surely the lot, which under both the Old and the New Testament dispensations has been used and owned as a solemn and religious appeal to God's pro-

vidence, ought not to be used in the manner it generally is, by those who have no fear of God before their eyes.

The lot is cast into the lap, but, casual as the determination may seem, the whole disposal thereof is from the Lord, Prov. 16. 33. Let us own his hand in the determination of every circumstance which befalls us, and especially in those by which any solemn and important trust may be committed to us. And may the consideration of this be an additional engagement upon us to discharge it with becoming diligence and entire fidelity!—(80.)

15. Probably it is meant that 120 were then assembled. The whole number of disciples is supposed to have been about 600.

16. These particulars respecting the death of Judas are supplementary to those in Matthew, namely, that after he had hung himself, his body fell from some height. They also describe effects which sometimes occur in cases of violent death from other causes.

22. Or, "must one of them be made a witness with us, of his resurrection."

26. It was then usual to fix the offices of the priests in the temple, when waiting there, by lot.

## CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1-4. *The descent of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost.*

We have here an account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ. It was at the time of a solemn feast; there was then a great concourse of people to Jerusalem from all parts of the country, and of proselytes from other countries, which would contribute much to propagate the gospel in all nations. It happened on the first day of the week, which was a confirmation of it to be the christian sabbath, the day which the Lord hath made to be a standing memorial in his church of the two great blessings—the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on that day of the week. Surely there should be a full and particular notice taken in our prayers and praises of these on that day. O that we may do it with suitable affections!

They were not as yet so many, but one place, and that not a large one, would hold them all, and they were there with one accord. We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them, there were strifes among them which should be the greatest; but now all these strifes were at an end; what they had received already of the Holy Ghost, when Christ breathed on them, had disposed them to holy love. They had prayed more together of late.

Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high? Let us be all of one accord, and notwithstanding variety of sentiments and interests, as no doubt there was among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for where brethren dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands his blessing.

When a company of believers are of one heart to seek and hope for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, a revival of true religion may be expected; for the promise stands sure, that these gifts shall be imparted to those who pray for them.

An audible summons was given them, to awaken their expectations. It was a rushing mighty wind; it came with great force. This was to signify the powerful influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, and thereby upon the world, that they should be mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations. It would awe the disciples, and put them into a serious and reverent frame, for the receiving of the Holy Ghost. Thus the convictions of the Spirit make way for his comforts; and the rough blasts of that blessed wind prepare the soul for its soft and gentle gales. Here is a visible sign of the gift they were to receive. There was an appearance of something like flaming fire, lighting on every one of them, which formed the resemblance of tongues, with part of them divided. Thus there was an outward sensible sign for confirming the faith of the disciples, and convincing others.

The sign given was fire, according to John Baptist's saying concerning Christ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. They were now, in the feast of Pentecost, celebrating the memorial of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; and that was given in fire. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, separates and burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul; in which, as in the fire on the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up.

This fire appeared in cloven tongues. The operations of the Spirit were many; that of speaking with divers tongues was one, and was singled out to be the first indication of the gift of the Holy Ghost, to that this sign had reference.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more plentifully and powerfully than before. They were filled with the graces of the Spirit, more than ever under

his sanctifying influences; more weaned from this world, and better acquainted with the other. They were more filled with the comforts of the Spirit, rejoiced more than ever in the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven; in it all their griefs and fears were swallowed up. They were also, for the proof of this, filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which is especially meant here: they were endued with miraculous powers for the furtherance of the gospel. They began to speak with other tongues, beside their native language, though they had never learned any other. They spake, not from previous thought or meditation, but as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was a very great miracle, it was a miracle upon the mind, and so had most of the nature of a gospel-miracle, for in the mind words are framed. It was also a very needful miracle. They were commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature, to disciple all nations; but how shall they master the several languages, to be understood by all nations! Therefore to prove that Christ could give authority to preach to the nations, he gives ability to preach in their respective languages.

1. They—the apostles, with the rest of the 120 disciples.—*Doddridge*. The festival of Pentecost was kept on the fiftieth day from the passover.

3. Not cloven, but distributed. *Bloomfield* says, We may render this verse, "And there were seen, as it were, tongues of fire, (pointed flames,) distributing themselves, and settling one on each."—A symbol of the gift of tongues. Unusual appearances of fire were considered emblems of the presence and influence of God.

Ver. 5—13. *The apostles speak in divers languages.*

At that time there were great numbers of Jews and proselytes in Jerusalem, who had come up to celebrate the feast, and when these extraordinary events were rumoured abroad, the multitudes came together to the place, and were astonished to hear themselves addressed in their several languages, by men of mean education and employment, natives of Galilee, who could only be expected to use their own barbarous dialect. They also remarked that the disciples spake of the wonderful works of God, even of those great things which related to the gospel salvation. The strangers, who understood the languages, were fully satisfied of the truth of the miracle, but the inhabitants of Judea, being prejudiced against the disciples of Jesus, derided them as a company of drunkards.

The diversity of languages introduced at Babel always has been a great hindrance to the diffusion of useful knowledge and true religion. The instruments whom the Lord saw fit first to employ in propagating the christian religion could have made no progress without this gift, which was a proof of their authority from God. And though we expect not such miraculous powers as were communicated to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, yet the pouring out the Spirit, in his ordinary influences and operations, will 'always produce a measure of the same effects as this extraordinary communication did. Some will be astonished at the change made in persons before known to be ignorant or careless; others will, without hesitation or correct information, pronounce it all to be delusion or hypocrisy, and treat it with scorn and derision.

8. Language is composed of sounds which signify certain ideas. But the connexion between the sounds and the things signified is not founded upon natural relation between them; it is entirely arbitrary, and can convey no information till the hearer has learned its meaning. Hence much time, practice, and application is necessary in acquiring any foreign language, before any one can become acquainted with the meaning of the sounds, and it is still more difficult to be able to utter them readily and correctly. What increases the difficulty in all languages, is, that the same word has a variety of meanings, so that if not skilfully used, most words may suggest meanings very different from what it is our intention to express. There are in every language peculiar modes of combining and arranging the words, without which a stranger cannot be understood. All who have engaged in the study of languages will admit that it is an arduous task, and that even of those who with much labour are able to understand what is written or spoken in a foreign tongue, very few are capable of conversing therein with ease. And the sounds are in general so different from what persons are accustomed to, that unless they begin to learn at a very early period of life, they can hardly ever speak so as to satisfy a native.—From *Dick*.

These observations show that the miracle of the gift of tongues was most remarkable. The apostles were unlearned men, acquainted only with the rude dialect of their country. (see note Mark 14. 70.) yet in a moment they were inspired with the knowledge of an immense number of words they never heard before, also of the peculiar structure and phrases of the languages, and their organs of speech were adapted to these various sounds, and they spoke the different languages without confusion or mixing them. All this, however, will not appear incredible when we consider that the cause was adequate to the effect. It was produced by the almighty Being who made the tongue of man, and who was the original Author of language—and it was necessary to qualify the apostles to execute their commission to preach the gospel to every creature.—From *Dick*.

9. The word *Judea* it is supposed, was origi-

Ver. 14—21.

nally only a remark in the margin, signifying that all the persons here alluded to were Jews.

13. There was no new wine at that time of the year, but the word signifies sweet, or strong wine, rendered particularly intoxicating.

Ver. 14—21. *Peter's address to the Jews.*

The substance of this discourse is recorded for our instruction. Peter's sermon is evidence that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the Divine favour; he who had denied Christ, now boldly confesses him. He spake with boldness, so as to silence the mixed conversation, and fix the attention of the people. He observed that the imputation of drunkenness must be totally groundless, on account of the time of day, nine of the clock in the morning; and before that time, on the sabbaths and solemn feasts, the Jews did not use to eat or drink: nay, ordinarily those who are drunk, are drunk in the night, not in the morning. The effects they witnessed were the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, concerning the pouring out the Spirit in the last days—those of the Messiah, which was now begun to be accomplished.

His account of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, is designed to awaken the hearers to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. Two things he resolves it into—that it was the fulfilling the scripture, and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension, consequently, proof of both. The word prophesy may refer, not only to fluency in speaking of Divine things for instruction of others, but also to warnings of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, to which the wonders mentioned evidently relate.

Though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not set aside the scriptures, nor think himself above them. Much of his discourse is quotation out of the Old Testament, to which he appeals, and with which he proves what he says. Christ's scholars never learn above their bible; and the Spirit is given, not to supersede the scriptures, but to enable us to understand and approve the scriptures. The Spirit now shall be poured out, not only upon the Jews, but upon all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews; though Peter himself did not yet understand it so, as appears Acts 11. 17. Or, upon all ranks and conditions of men. The Jewish doctors taught, that the Spirit

came only upon wise and rich men, and such as were of the seed of Israel.

The apostle certainly meant to warn the Jews, that their prayers for deliverance from approaching miseries would not be heard, if they continued to reject the promised Messiah, whose coming, resurrection, and exaltation were attested by those miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit. The words also imply the same warning to all who read them, in respect of their deliverance from the wrath to come. Assuredly none will escape the condemnation of the great day, except those who have previously called upon the name of the Lord, in and through his Son Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour of lost sinners, and the Judge of all mankind. All that do so shall then be saved from destruction and made heirs of eternal life.

16. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit being vouchsafed for one especial purpose only, the benefit of the christian church, were gradually withdrawn as soon as that church was established, and the canon of scripture completed. But the ordinary operations, without which no child of Adam can be renewed unto holiness, are to be continued for ever, even unto the end of the world. The most general opinion respecting this miracle of Pentecost is, that the gift of tongues lasted during the ministry of the apostles, and that it was gradually withdrawn when the purpose for which it was given was accomplished.—*Townsend.*

17. The traditions of the Jews applied this prophecy of Joel to the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which should take place in the days of the Messiah. Thus St. Peter called upon them to admit the present application of an event they had been accustomed to expect.—This portion from Joel is read in the service of the Karmite Jews on the day of Pentecost, from which it is probable that it was read on that day, in the time of the apostles.

Ver. 22—36. *Peter's address to the Jews.*

From this gift of the Holy Ghost, Peter preaches unto them Jesus; and here is an abstract of the history of Christ. He calls him Jesus of Nazareth, because by that name Christ was generally known, but God testified approbation of his doctrine, by the power he gave him to work miracles. The matter of fact was not to be denied; the inference from it cannot be disputed; the reasoning is as strong as the evidence; if he did those miracles, certainly God approved him, declared him to be, what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Here is also an account of his death and sufferings, which they witnessed but a few weeks before. His death is con-

sidered, 1. As God's act; and of wonderful grace and wisdom. He delivered him to death; not only permitted him to be put to death, but gave him up, devoted him. Thus Divine justice must be satisfied, sinners saved, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified, according to an eternal counsel, which could not be altered. 2. As the people's act; and in them it was an act of prodigious sin and folly.

The wicked and idolatrous Romans, gentile sinners, were the immediate agents in the crucifixion of Christ, yet were only the instruments of Jewish rage and cruelty in what they did.—(80.)

Neither God's designing this event from eternity, nor his bringing good out of it to eternity, would in the least excuse their sin; for it was their voluntary act and deed, from a principle morally evil. He charges it on them as parts of the nation on which it would be visited, the more effectually to bring them to faith and repentance, as the only way to distinguish themselves from the guilty, and to discharge themselves from the guilt.

Christ's resurrection effectually removed the reproach of his death; Peter insists largely upon this. He describes his resurrection. Divine justice being satisfied, it was not possible he should be detained by death, either by right or by force; for he had life in himself, and in his own power, and had conquered the prince of death. He attests the truth of his resurrection; He showed it to be the fulfilling the scripture, Ps. 16. 8, 11, which, though in part applicable to David as a saint, yet refers chiefly to Jesus Christ, of whom David was a type. He set before him his Father's glory as his end in all; foresaw that his sufferings would redound abundantly to the honour of God, and would issue in his own joy. With the prospect of these he was borne up and carried on. He had assurance of his Father's presence and power going with him; and it was a constant pleasure to our Lord Jesus to look to the end of his work, and to be sure that the issue would be glorious. The happy issue of his death and sufferings carried him through them, not only with courage but with cheerfulness. The soul shall not continue in a state of separation from the body: it shall remain but a little while in the grave; Thou wilt not suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Christ was God's holy One, sanctified and set

apart to his service in the work of redemption. His death and sufferings should be, not to him only, but to all his, an inlet to a blessed immortality. And all his sorrows and sufferings should end in perfect and perpetual felicity. The reward set before him was joy, fulness of joy, and that in God's countenance. Peter comments upon this text, especially so much of it as relates to the resurrection of Christ. David could not say that of himself, for he died; it was plain he did see corruption. It followed that he spoke not of himself, but of the Messiah, knowing that He would descend from him in respect of his human nature, to reign upon his throne over the people of God for ever. In the prospect of these events David spake of the resurrection of the Messiah. This event had taken place as foretold, and of this the apostles were witnesses.

Nor did the resurrection rest upon their testimony alone, for having ascended, and being exalted to the highest dignity and authority, Christ had poured upon his disciples the miraculous gifts and Divine influences, of which they witnessed the effects. David had not ascended into heaven, according to the meaning of the psalm already cited; but, in another place, calling the Messiah his Lord, though he was to be his Son, he had foretold his exaltation to supreme authority. As the events accorded so exactly with ancient prophecies, the Jews might be assured that God had constituted Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, the Lord of all, that he was indeed the promised Messiah, actually risen, ascended, and glorified.

It was not possible that the Redeemer should be held under the power of death, though he endured the pain of it; and the scripture cannot be broken, or his believing people come short of that resurrection of which he was the glorious first fruits. Through their crucifixion, risen, and ascended Saviour, the ways of life are made known unto them; they are encouraged to expect the joy of God's presence, and his favour for evermore. All this springs from assured belief that Jesus is the Lord, and the anointed Saviour of all who obey him.

This is the great truth of the gospel, by which we are to believe, that the same Jesus, the very same who was crucified at Jerusalem, is he to whom we owe allegiance, and from whom we are to expect protection, as Lord and Christ.

Ver. 37—41. *Three thousand souls converted.*

We are now to see another blessed fruit of the pouring out of the Spirit, in its influence upon the hearers of the gospel. From the first delivery of that Divine message, it appeared that there was Divine power going with it; and it was mighty, through God, to do wonders; thousands were immediately brought to the obedience of faith.

The apostle's argument was very conclusive; but when we consider the obstinate unbelief of the Jews under our Lord's miracles and teaching, we see that neither Peter's words, nor the miracle they witnessed, could have produced such effects had not the Holy Spirit been given. The Comforter being come, he convinced them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, John 16. 8—11. The apostle's words, therefore, pierced their hearts like arrows, by these powerful influences, and filled them with terror at their guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory. Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin, cannot but experience inward uneasiness. They cried out to the apostles, in deep distress, to learn by what means they might escape condemnation. The apostle exhorted them to repent of their sins, and openly to avow their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, by being baptized in his name. Thus professing their faith in Him, they would receive remission of their sins, and partake of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; for the promise, both respecting the Messiah and the blessings of his kingdom, made to Abraham and others, and the especial promise of the Spirit, by Joel, was made to them and to their children; also to all, however dispersed, whom God should call by his word and Spirit. God can make his call to reach those who are ever so far off, and none come but those whom he calls. The apostle added many other earnest exhortations, that they should embrace the gospel, and fleeing for refuge to Jesus from the wrath to come, thus save themselves from the destruction about to come upon that perverse and rebellious generation of Israel.

To separate from wicked people, is the only way to save ourselves from them. Though we thereby expose ourselves to their rage and enmity, we really save ourselves from them. Those who repent of their sins, and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, must evidence their sincerity by

breaking off all intimate society with the wicked. We must save ourselves from them ; which denotes avoiding them with dread and holy fear.

By God's grace three thousand persons accepted the gospel invitation, and gladly received his word, and were baptized, and no doubt were made partakers of the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. But there is nothing to lead us to imagine that they received any miraculous gifts of any sort or kind. And, surely, if they had received such astonishing gifts, as to heal the sick, speak with tongues, and do other wonderful works, the apostle could not in such a passage have been silent upon it. There can be no doubt but that "the gift of the Holy Ghost," which all, without exception, received, and from which no true believer has ever been debarred, was that Spirit of adoption, that converting, guiding, sanctifying grace, which is bestowed upon all the members of the family of our heavenly Father.—(8.)

They were baptized ; believing with the heart, they made confession with the mouth, and enrolled themselves among the disciples of Christ by the sacred rite and ceremony he had instituted.

Those who gladly received the word were baptized, and the numerous converts made on this occasion, three thousand in number, deeply convinced of their guilt and danger, rejoiced to hear of free forgiveness through the Saviour whom they had joined in crucifying. Repentance and remission of sins still are preached to the chief of sinners, in the Redeemer's name ; still the Holy Spirit seals the blessing on the believer's heart ; still the encouraging promises are to us and to our children ; still the blessings are sent to all that are afar off. Let us, then, exhort and persuade sinners to save themselves from those that reject the gospel, and let us escape from those who would hinder us in the way to heaven.

Ver. 42—47. *Piety and affection of the disciples.*

We often speak of the primitive church, and appeal to it, and to the history of it ; in these verses we have the history of the truly primitive church, of the first days of it, its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest innocence. They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion ; for christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to com-

munion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him, and has promised to meet us.

Though the conversion of this multitude was sudden, their profession was stedfast. They associated with the apostles in religious conference and worship, joining them in breaking of bread as well as in prayers. This seems to refer to the administration of the Lord's supper in remembrance of the atoning sufferings and death of Christ, Acts 20. 7, which evidently was very frequent in primitive times. Breaking of bread comes in between the word and prayer ; it has reference to both, and is a help to both. The Lord's supper is a sermon to the eye, and a confirmation of God's word to us ; it is also an encouragement to our prayers, and a solemn expression of the ascent of our souls to God.

The impression upon the people in general was very great ; they evidently were overawed. The souls of people were influenced by the awful preaching and holy living of the apostles and disciples.

As many of the converts were strangers, and others were poor, those who were richer shared their abundance with them. This evidenced indifference to the world, gratitude to the Lord, and cordial affection to one another. This was peculiarly suitable to the state of the church at that time, and the same disposition ought always to prevail, though the same way of expressing it is not required, as is evident from St. Paul's epistles.

The greatness of the event raised them above the world, and the Holy Ghost filled them with such love, as made every one to be to another as himself, and so made all common, not by destroying property, but selfishness, and causing charity. And God who moved them to it knew that they were quickly to be driven from their possessions in Judea.—(3.)

They daily continued to meet together in the courts of the temple for the worship of God, and in the houses of believers, where they ate together, and also joined in the sacred ordinance. They were frequent in their praises of God, so that even the Jews who did not join them, esteemed and showed favour to them. Thus the Lord, from day to day, inclined the hearts of more among them to embrace the gospel and join the disciples of Jesus, not merely professors, but such as were actually brought into a state of accept-

ance with God, being made partakers of regenerating grace. Those whom God has designed for eternal salvation, shall one time or other be effectually brought to Christ: and those who are brought to Christ are added to the church in a holy covenant by baptism, and in holy communion by other ordinances.

Let us study the pattern here exhibited, and pray without ceasing for the pouring out of the Spirit, to produce the like blessed effects in us and around us, that we also may continue stedfast in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship with all true believers—that whatever we do, we may do all to the glory of God, in gladness and singleness of heart. And when the most unlikely persons, such as the crucifiers of the Lord Jesus, are transformed by the gospel into peaceful and exemplary servants of God, it may be expected that the Lord will add to his church daily such as shall be saved. May the Lord pour out his Holy Spirit on all ministers, Christians, and congregations, for these blessed purposes, till the earth be filled with the knowledge of his glory!

42. By breaking of bread is generally understood partaking of the Lord's supper, but some suppose it to refer to common meals.

43. It is evident from ch. 5. 4, that the converts were not required to part with their possessions. That some did so is, as *Doddridge* observes, an incontestable proof of the power of the gospel, and many peculiar reasons made this community of goods eligible at that time, and circumstances made it practicable in the infant state of the church.

47. The Lord Jesus so eminently owned and blessed their gospel ministrations, together with their exemplary temper and behaviour, that by these means He continually made still many more converts, and added them to this first New Testament church, even such as were brought into a saved state, and should be effectually secured and carried on to eternal salvation, as well as delivered from the destruction that was coming on Jerusalem, and on the body of the obstinate, unbelieving Jews.—*Guyse*.

### CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1-11. *A lame man healed by Peter and John.*

We were told, ch. 2. 43, that many signs and wonders were done by the apostles; here we have an instance. The apostles and primitive believers attended the temple worship at the hours of prayer. Peter and John went up together, and seem to have been led by an immediate Divine suggestion, to work a miracle on a man who was above forty years old, and had been a cripple from his birth.

The gate of the temple at which he

was laid was called Beautiful, for its extraordinary magnificence. Peter, instead of turning his eyes from him, fastened his eyes upon him. John did so also, for they were both guided by one and the same Spirit; and they said, Look on us. He justly thought this gave him cause to expect that he should receive something. We must come to God, attend upon his word, and apply ourselves unto him in prayer, with hearts fixed and expectations raised. We must look up to heaven, and expect to receive benefit by what God speaks from thence, and by an answer of peace to the prayers sent up thither.

His expectations of an alms were disappointed. Peter and John had money laid at their feet; but that was appropriated to the maintenance of the church, and public trusts ought to be strictly and faithfully observed. Yet those who are poor in the world, may be very rich in spiritual gifts, graces, and comforts. Certainly there is that which we are capable of receiving, which is infinitely better than silver and gold, Prov. 3. 14. They also give him that which was better—the cure of his disease, which he would gladly have given a great deal of silver and gold for, if he had it, and it could have been so obtained. Peter had no silver and gold to give, yet, said he, such as I have I give thee. Those may be, and ought to be charitable and helpful to the poor, who have not wherewithal to give in charity; those who have not silver and gold, may be serviceable to the blind, and lame, and sick. As every one has received the gift, so let him minister it.

Peter bade him rise up and walk, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus it is in the healing of our souls, which are spiritually impotent. If we would attempt to good purpose the healing men's souls, we must go forth in the name and power of Jesus Christ, calling on helpless sinners to arise and walk in the way of holiness, by faith in Him.

Peter took him by the right hand, in the same name in which he had spoken to him, and lifted him up. Not that this could contribute to the cure; it was but a sign, intimating the help he should receive from God. It is Christ that does all; he put strength into him.

The man leaped up in obedience to the command, Arise. He stood and walked; he trod strongly, and moved steadily; to manifest the cure, and that it was a

thorough cure. Those who experience the working of Divine grace upon them, should evidence it. Has God put strength into us? Let us stand before him in the exercises of devotion; let us walk before him in all the instances of religious conversation. Let us stand up resolutely for him, and walk cheerfully with him, and both in strength derived from him.

He testified his affection to Peter and John; he held them, and would not let them go. He entered with them into the temple, not only to offer up his praises and thanksgivings to God, but probably to hear more from the apostles of that Jesus in whose name he had been healed. Those who have experienced the power of Christ, earnestly desire to grow in their acquaintance with Christ.

He was there walking, and leaping, and praising God. The strength God has given us, both in mind and body, should be used to his praise. Now this man was cured, he was in this joy and thankfulness. The people were satisfied of the truth of the miracle. The best evidence that it was a complete cure, was that he praised God for it. Mercies are perfected when they are sanctified.

They were filled with wonder, and were in an ecstasy. There seems to be this effect of the pouring out of the Spirit that the people were more affected with the miracles the apostles wrought, than they had been with those of the same kind wrought by Christ himself. All the people ran together to them in Solomon's porch; some, only to gratify curiosity with the sight of men who had such power; others, with desire to hear them preach. Thus when the Lord now puts forth his power the attention of men is excited; facts proclaim the efficacy of the gospel, and every true convert is a monument to the honour of the great Redeemer.

How sweet the thought to our souls, that in respect to all the crippled faculties of our fallen nature the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth can make us whole! With what holy joy and rapture shall we tread the holy courts, when God the Spirit causes us to enter therein by his strength!—(37.)

Ver. 12—18. *Peter's address.*

The apostles demanded of the Jews why they were so astonished at this miracle, when so many others, combining to prove the same doctrine, had been done among them. The apostles had not healed the

man by their own power, but the God of their fathers had wrought this and the other wonders, to glorify his Son, whose death they had procured, when Pilate, convinced of his innocence, sought to release him. They had wickedly preferred one who destroyed men's lives, to the Prince of life himself; but He had been raised from the dead, and the miracle which excited their amazement had been performed by faith in the name of Jesus, by power derived from him. They had used that name in faith, and God had, in answer to their expectations, given perfect soundness to the cripple, showing that Jesus was risen, that he was the Messiah, and that the apostles were his servants and witnesses. Observe the difference in the manner of working the miracle. Our Lord always spoke the language of Almighty power, never hesitated to receive the greatest honour, nor cautioned any against supposing that he wrought miracles to manifest and glorify his power. But the apostles referred all to their Lord, and were afraid of receiving any honour, except as his undeserving instruments. This shows that Jesus knew himself to be One with the Father, and coequal with Him, while the apostles were conscious that they were weak, sinful men; dependent on Jesus for every thing, whose power effected the cure. Useful men must see to it that they are very humble. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, give glory. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ.

Whatever good has been done, or if we have been enabled to fight successfully against sin and temptation, it has been effected by faith in Christ's name; and we must go forward in all future labours and conflicts, and in efforts to promote the cause of truth and holiness, in the same faith, giving Him all the glory.

The apostle showed the Jews the atrocity of their crime, but would not irritate or drive them to despair. He was willing to suppose they had done this deed in ignorance—in ignorance, however, which resulted from pride, prejudice, and many criminal sources. Thus the prophecies of scripture concerning the atoning sufferings of the promised Messiah had been fulfilled. Assuredly, those who reject, refuse, or deny Christ, do it through ignorance of one kind or another; but this can in no case be admitted as an excuse.



though it may at some times alleviate the guilt, and the mercy of God in Christ Jesus gives ground for hope of forgiveness and eternal salvation. This was the language of Peter's charity; it teaches us to make the best of those whom we desire to make better.

12, 16. *Whitby* observes, that here is a plain proof of the variation of the doctrine of the church of Rome from that of the apostles, since the former teaches that God confers on mankind many benefits by the merits of the saints, while the apostles here, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, disclaim any excellency or piety in themselves, which might make them worthy to be God's instruments above others.

Ver. 19—21. *Peter's address.*

The apostle showed the absolute necessity of repentance, which therefore is to be solemnly charged upon the consciences of all who desire that their sins may be blotted out, and that they may share in the refreshment which nothing but a sense of Christ's pardoning love can afford. Blessed are they who have experienced it. They may look upon all their present comforts as the dawn of eternal glory; and having seen Christ with an eye of faith, and received that cure which nothing but his powerful and gracious name can effect, may be assured that He will come again to complete the work he has so graciously begun, and to reduce the seeming irregularities of the present state into everlasting harmony, complete order, and perfect beauty.—(80.)

The prophets in general predicted, not only glorious times to the church under the reign of the Messiah, but to the nation of Israel when converted to Him. As the success of the first attempt had been so signal, it is probable that the disciples thought Christ would soon restore the kingdom to Israel, after having first brought the nation to believe in Him. The apostles, for a considerable time subsequent to the day of Pentecost, did not understand many things relating to the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, and the fulfilment of the prophecies. It was not necessary for the Holy Spirit to make known the times and seasons of these dispensations, and without such an immediate revelation, the apostle might expect those happy times for his nation were at hand. Such obscurity is left on these subjects, that diverse opinions still prevail in respect to the reign of Christ during the millennium; and his coming to set up his kingdom all over the earth, has often been confounded with his

coming to judge the world. But when sinners are convinced of their sins, they will cry to the Lord for pardon; and to the penitent, converted, and believing, times of refreshment assuredly will come from the presence of the Lord.

Hopes of the pardon of sin, upon repentance, should be powerful inducement to repent. Repent that your sins may be blotted out; and that repentance is evangelical, which flows from taking hold upon the mercy of God in Christ, and hopes of pardon. If our sins are forgiven, we have now reason to be of good cheer; but the comfort will be complete, when the pardon shall be allowed, and our justification published before angels and men. During these times of toil and conflict, doubts and fears within, troubles and dangers without, we cannot have that full satisfaction of our pardon, and in it, that we shall have when the refreshing times come, which shall wipe away all tears.

It is agreeable to a state of trial and probation, that the glorified Redeemer should be out of sight, because we must live by that faith in him, which is the evidence of things not seen; because he must be believed on in the world, he must be received up into glory.

21. The word translated "restitution," properly signifies a restoration of any thing to some former state, and, by implication, for the better.—*Bloomfield*. He adds that it is capable of several interpretations, according to the view taken of the foregoing verse, but considers that it refers to Christ's advent at his millennial reign. *Townsend* says, By whatever word we express the idea, it is still the same. St. Peter refers to the eventual completion of the happiness of mankind, by the universal establishment of christianity, and the blessings of its influence.

Ver. 22—26. *Peter's address.*

A more masterly address than this cannot be imagined, to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequences of their unbelief, in the very words of Moses, their favourite prophet, out of pretended zeal for whom they were ready to reject christianity, and to attempt its destruction.—(80.)

The persons to whom the apostle spake were descendants of those to whom the prophets had been sent, and they inherited the advantages of the covenant first made with their fathers, especially that concerning the Messiah, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Therefore the first proposal of the gospel was to be made unto them. For God, having raised up his Son Jesus, to be a Prophet, Priest, and Ruler, like unto Moses, but infinitely superior to him, had

sent him in the preached gospel and by his Holy Spirit, to render them truly happy, not by worldly advancement, as they expected, but by teaching, encouraging, and enabling them to turn away from all their sins, that they might walk acceptably before Him. The apostle says, He was sent unto you first. You of the seed of Abraham, the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, to you is the offer of gospel grace made. The personal ministry of Christ, as that of the prophets, was confined to the Jews. He is sent to you first, to bless you, that is his primary errand. Not to condemn you, as you deserve, but to justify you, if you will accept the justification offered you, in the way wherein it is offered. Christ's errand into the world was to bring a blessing with him. He sent his Spirit to be the great blessing. By Christ God sends blessings to us, and through him only we can expect to receive them. Also Christ came to bless us, by turning us away from our iniquities, saving us from our sins, Matt. 1. 21. Sin is what we naturally cleave to, the design of Divine grace is to turn us from it, nay, to turn us against it, that we may not only forsake, but hate it. The gospel has direct tendency thereto; not only as it requires us, every one of us, to turn from our iniquities, but as it promises us grace to enable us to do so. And every soul who now refuses to hear, believe, and obey that Prophet like unto Moses, whom God hath raised up unto us, will most assuredly be destroyed. Let none imagine that they can be happy by continuing in sin, when God declares that the blessing consists in being turned from all iniquity. Let none think that they understand or believe the gospel, who only seek deliverance from the punishment of sin, but do not expect happiness in being delivered from sin itself. And let none expect to be turned from their iniquities, except by believing in, and receiving Christ the Son of God, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

And if Christ be the substance and sum of all that the prophets have written, is it not the duty and interest of every christian, in reading the scriptures, to search for the testimony they bear to this Christ, and the salvation procured by his death.—(11.)

22. *Jortin* gives a parallel between Moses and Christ in thirty-nine particulars. See *Townsend*.

## CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1-4. *Peter and John imprisoned.*

The sadducees seem latterly to have increased in number and influence. The testimony of the apostles to the resurrection of Jesus tended to subvert their scheme of infidelity, and thus excited them the more to oppose their doctrine.

The apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. This doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was verified in Jesus; they proved that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. They preached the resurrection of Christ, as their warrant for what they did. It is secured by him to all believers. The resurrection of the dead includes all the happiness of the future state; this they preached through Jesus Christ, attainable through him, see Phil. 3. 10, 11, and through him only.

One would wonder what should make the sadducees to be such furious silencers and persecutors. If there is no life to come, what harm can other men's hopes of it do them? But in depraved souls all faculties are vitiated. A man spiritually blind has a malignant heart and a cruel hand to this day.—(3.)

It grieved them, both that the gospel-doctrine was preached so publicly, so boldly, and that the people were so ready to hear it. They were grieved at that in which angels rejoice. Miserable is their case, to whom the glory of Christ's kingdom is a grief; for since the glory of that kingdom is everlasting, it follows of course that their grief will be everlasting also. They took Peter and John as they were preaching, and committed them to prison till the next day. Many of their hearers had cheerfully received the word, and the number of believers was now increased to about five thousand men. The harmless and useful servants of Christ, have often been troubled for their work of faith and labour of love, when profligates have escaped with impunity. Ministers may generally look for contempt and persecution from man, in proportion as God honours and prospers them. And to this day instances are not wanting in which reading the scriptures, social prayer, and religious conversation meet with frowns and checks. But if we observe the instructions of Christ, and obey his precepts, he will support us.

1. The captain of the temple was a Jew, who was over the nightly watch of priests and levites.

Ver. 5—14. *The apostles boldly testify to Christ.*

Annas not only himself held the office of high-priest for many years, but saw it filled by five of his sons, and some of his sons in-law; hence, though, deprived of that office by the Romans, he afterwards continued to take the chief sway in Jewish affairs.—(33.) Caiaphas seems to have exercised the ordinary functions of the high-priesthood, and Annas to have had the most influence with the council.

The question they asked the apostles was, By what authority do ye these things? Who commissioned you to preach such doctrine, and empowered you to work such a miracle as this?

Peter being filled with the Holy Ghost, felt none of the terrors which formerly led him to deny his Lord, but spake before that large assembly with the utmost courage. He insisted that the action for which they were called to answer, was a good deed; an act of mercy and of Divine power. He would have all to understand, that it had been wrought by the name, or power, of Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Messiah, whom they had crucified. The man standing before them, miraculously cured, confirmed their testimony to his resurrection from the dead, which proved him to be the Messiah. He urged that Jesus was the person of whom David prophesied as the Stone which should become the support of the spiritual temple; they had set it at nought, and thrown it aside as worthless, though there was no other name under heaven by which sinners might be saved from destruction.

This plainly intimated, that no man can be saved, except in the way of God's express appointment; and that these rulers must either be saved by that Jesus whom they had crucified, or they must perish for ever. The name of Jesus is given to men of every age and nation, as that whereby alone believers are saved from the wrath to come, not from bodily sickness, or temporal death. It is not an indifferent matter but of absolute necessity, that people believe in his name, and call upon it.

When the council found the constancy and courage of the apostles, and considered that they were men of mean education, obscure station, and destitute of that sort of knowledge on which they laid chief stress, they recollected that they

had been seen with Jesus. And as the man, who had been healed, was standing by, ready to attest the miracle, they could not object to the fact, or deny the inference. But when avarice, ambition, or any corrupt passion, rules within, men shut their eyes, and close their hearts, in enmity against the light, considering those as ignorant and unlearned, who desire to know nothing in comparison with Christ crucified.

And observe, those who have been with Jesus, in converse and communion with him, have been attending on his word, praying in his name, and celebrating the memorials of his death and resurrection, should conduct themselves, in every thing, so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, it raises them above this world.

6. These names show how powerful was the opposition, against which the church had to contend in its infant state. John probably was the celebrated rabban Johanan, often mentioned in the Talmuds. Alexander is supposed to have been a noble and wealthy Egyptian Jew, who contributed largely to the adorning of the temple. The descendants and relations of Annas were very numerous and powerful.

9. "By whom," or "through whom, he is made whole."—*Scholefield.*

12. The sequel shows, that Peter did not here speak exclusively of the disordered in body, and their healing. The sense of Peter's words is, "Christ is the only Saviour of men; from him, as the sole Author of these blessings, men obtain deliverance from all the calamities of the present life—at least upon this ground, that natural and outward sufferings are no more to be regarded as punishments of sin, or manifestations of Divine anger; but above all things, on Jesus alone rests the salvation of souls."—*J. P. Smith, from Rosenmüller.* *Bloomfield* shows, that the words cannot have any sense but that of salvation.

Ver. 15—22. *Peter and John refuse to be silenced.*

They commanded the apostles to go aside out of the council. The designs of Christ's enemies are carried on in close cabals. The question was, What shall we do to these men? If they would have yielded to the power of truth, it had been easy to say what they should do to these men. They should have received their doctrine, have been baptized by them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and joined in fellowship with them. But when men will not be persuaded to do what they should do, it is no marvel that they are at a loss what to do. They knew it would be unrighteous to punish the apostles,

and therefore should have been restrained from it by the fear of God; but they considered it only as dangerous, and therefore were held in only by fear of the people, who were convinced of the truth of the miracle. Yet they resolve it is necessary to silence them for the future. All their care is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people.

We do not find that they give any reason why the doctrine of Christ must be suppressed; they cannot say it is either false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason, that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny. These priests not only forbid to preach the gospel, they threaten to punish the preaching it as a heinous crime; but those who know how to put just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put just contempt upon the world's threatenings.

The apostles, in effect, declare that they are resolved to go on preaching, and justify themselves, 1. With the command of God; You charge us not to preach the gospel, He has charged us to preach it: whom must we obey, God or you? Can you think it right in the sight of God to break a Divine command in obedience to human injunctions? That is right indeed, which is right in the sight of God; his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, by that we must govern ourselves. 2. The convictions of their consciences. They felt the influence; what a blessed change it wrought upon them, and therefore they cannot but speak of it. Those speak the doctrine of Christ best, who have felt the power of it, and tasted the sweetness of it, and have themselves been deeply affected with it. They look with concern upon perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore will be faithful in warning, and showing them the right way. These are things we are fully assured of ourselves; and things which we have seen and heard: the love of Christ and the love of souls constrain us, 2 Cor. 5. 11, 14.

When the heart is powerfully influenced by heavenly love and zeal, the understanding clearly perceives the importance of the truth, and a man cannot refrain from speaking it; holy principles have commanding influence over him.

The council thought they could have the same influence upon the apostles that

they had upon other men; but they were deceived, for they had been with Jesus. They threatened them, and when they had done that, they let them go. 1. Because they durst not contradict the people. As rulers, by the ordinance of God, are made a terror and restraint to wicked people, so people are sometimes, by the providence of God, made a terror and restraint to wicked rulers. 2. Because they could not contradict the miracle; for the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought. The older he grew, the more inveterate and manifest was the disease. If those who are grown into years, and have been long accustomed to evil, are cured, the power of Divine grace is therein so much the more magnified. The truth of it was plainly attested; he was able to speak for himself.

Let us be careful to maintain a good conscience in our religious profession. The apostles resolved to obey God alone, and they minded not the contrary commands and threatenings of men. None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly and consistently, till they have learned to regulate their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of the vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; conscience and inclination: the result will be, you can serve neither fully; God has the prior claim to our obedience. No human interference can break this. In such cases tyrants and wicked rulers may punish those who refuse to obey their mandates, but God approves, and it is right to stand fast for the truth. We may submit, even to the most partial judges, whether this principle ought not to be acted upon on all occasions in which the authority of God, and that of man, interfere.—(79.)

Ver. 23—31. *The believers unite in prayer and praise, of which God signifies his acceptance.*

Though their enemies endeavoured to frighten them from the work they were engaged in, yet the apostles went to their own company, and feared not the wrath of the rulers. Christ's followers do best in company, provided it be in their own company. We should communicate to our brethren the providences of God which relate to us, and our experience of his presence with us, that they may assist us to acknowledge God therein.

When they heard of the malice of the priests, and the courage of the sufferers, one, in the name of the rest, lifted up his voice to God, and the rest joined with him, with one mind.

In this solemn address to God we have, 1. Their adoration of Jehovah as the Creator of the world. It is great encouragement to God's servants, both in doing work, and suffering work, that they serve the God who made all things, and therefore has the disposal of all events concerning them.

2. Their reconciling themselves to the present dispensations of Providence, by reflecting upon those scriptures in the Old Testament which foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah would meet with such opposition. Let it not therefore be a surprise to them, or a discouragement to any in embracing their doctrine, for the scripture must be fulfilled.

3. Their representation of the accomplishment of those predictions in the enmity and malice of the rulers against Christ. What was foretold we see fulfilled, ver. 27, 28. The Roman governors, with the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers under their command, and with the people of Israel, the rulers of the Jews and the mob under their influence, were gathered together "against the holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed." It was he whom God anointed, both qualified for his undertaking, and called to it; and thence he was called the Lord's Christ. He was anointed to be a Saviour, therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin. God's hand and his counsel determined it, his will, and his wisdom. His hand and his counsel always agree. God's serving his own purposes by the wicked and unholy instruments that executed this design, was no excuse for the wickedness in doing it. Sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it.

4. Their petition with reference to the case at this time. They pray that God would take cognizance of the malice of their enemies. Behold their threatenings, and either tie their hands or turn their hearts; make their wrath, as far as it is let loose, to praise thee, and the remainder thereof do thou restrain, Ps. 76. 10. It is a comfort to us, that if we are unjustly threatened, and bear it patiently, we may make ourselves easy by spreading the case before the Lord, and leaving it

with him. And they pray that God, by his grace, would animate them to go on cheerfully with their work. In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may be enabled to go on with cheerfulness and resolution in our work and duty. They do not pray, Lord, let us retire from our work, now that it is become dangerous; but, Lord, give us grace to go on in our work, and not to fear the face of man. Observe, Those who are sent on God's errands, ought to deliver their message with boldness, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Those who desire Divine aids and encouragements, may depend upon them, and ought to go forth, and go on, in the strength of the Lord God. The threatenings of our enemies shall stir us up to more courage and resolution in our work. Are they daring that fight against Christ? let us not be fearful who are for him. Also, they pray that God would still give them power to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached. Nothing imboldens faithful ministers more in their work, than the tokens of God's presence with them, and Divine power going along with them. They pray, That God would stretch forth his hand to heal both the bodies and souls of men; else in vain do they stretch forth their hands, either in preaching or in curing. That signs and wonders might be done by the name of the holy child Jesus, which would be convincing to the people, and confounding to the enemies. Observe, it is the honour of Christ that they aim at in this request.

God gave them a sign of the acceptance of their prayers, ver. 31. When they had prayed, perhaps many of them prayed successively, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. There was a strong mighty wind, such as that when the Spirit was poured out upon them, it shook the house, which was now their house of prayer. He that shook this place, could make the hearts of those who threatened his servants, thus to tremble; for He cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken.

God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit. Their prayer, without doubt, was accepted, for it was answered; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than

ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness, and not to be afraid of men. The Holy Ghost taught them not only what to speak, but how to speak. Those that were endued habitually with the powers of the Holy Ghost, had yet occasion for fresh supplies of the Spirit, according as the various occurrences of their service were, which teaches us to live in actual dependence upon the grace of God, according as the duty of every day requires. As in the providence of God, so in the grace of God, we not only in general live, and have our being, but move in every particular action, ch. 17. 28. And we have here an instance of the performance of the promise, that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke 11. 13, for it was in answer to prayer that they were filled with the Holy Ghost; and we have also an example of the improvement of that gift, which is required of all on whom it is bestowed; they have it and use it, and have more of it. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Isa. 50. 7.

Ver. 32—37. *The holy charity of the christians.*

We have a general idea given us in these verses, and it is a very beautiful one, of the spirit and state of the primitive church—a view of its age of infancy and innocence.

1. The disciples loved one another. Multitudes believed, even in Jerusalem. They were all of one heart and one soul, though there were many of different ages, tempers, and conditions in the world. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples, to love one another. and his dying prayer for them, that they all might be one. Thus it was then, and we may not despair of seeing it so again, when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high.

2. The ministers went on in their work with great vigour and success. The doctrine they preached was the resurrection of Christ; a matter of fact, which being duly explained and illustrated, with the proper inferences from it, was a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of christians.

3. Great grace was upon them all, not only all the apostles, but all the believers. Christ poured out abundance of grace upon them, such as qualified them for services, by enduing them with great

power. There were evident fruits of this grace in all they said and did. The people saw a beauty and excellency in them, and respected them.

4. They were dead to this world. This was as great an evidence of the grace of God in them as any other. They insisted not upon property, which even children seem to have a sense of, and which worldly people triumph in. These believers were so taken up with an inheritance in the other world, that this was as nothing to them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call what they had their own, in pride and vain glory, boasting of it, or trusting in it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were continually expecting to be stripped of all for their adherence to him. They did not say, that aught was their own; for we can call nothing our own but sin; what we have in the world is more God's than our own; we have it from him, must use it for him, and are accountable for it to him. No man said what he had was *his own*, for he was ready to distribute, willing to communicate; his poor neighbours were welcome to what he had to spare from himself and family. No marvel that they were of one heart and soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. Men's holding their own, and grasping at more than their own, are the rise of wars and fightings.

They abounded in charity, so that, in effect, they had all things common; for there was not any among them who lacked, care was taken for their supply. As there were many poor that received the gospel, so there were some rich who were able to maintain them, and the grace of God made them willing. The gospel has made all things common, not so that the poor are allowed to rob the rich, but so that the rich are appointed to relieve the poor.

Then many of them sold their estates. The money so raised they laid at the apostles' feet. It was not hoarded up, but distribution was made, by proper persons, unto every man according as he had need. Great care ought to be taken in the distribution of public charity, that it be given to such as have need, such as are not able to procure a maintenance for themselves; but, above all, those who are reduced to want for well doing, and for

the testimony of a good conscience, ought to be provided for. And that it be given to every man for whom it is intended, according as he hath need, without partiality or respect of persons.

Here is one in particular mentioned, who was remarkable for this generous charity; it was Barnabas, afterward Paul's colleague. His name was Joses, of the tribe of Levi. The apostles, in token of their esteem for him, gave him a name, Barnabas—the son of prophecy, so it properly signifies. But the heliunist Jews called it by a word rendered here, a son of exhortation; so some: a son of consolation; as we read it. He was one who walked very much in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, a cheerful christian, and this enlarged his heart in charity to the poor; or one eminent for speaking peace to wounded troubled consciences; he had admirable qualifications in that respect. His charity is particularly noticed. He was eminent in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles; that this might not appear to come from any ill will to his own nation, we have here his benevolence to the Jewish converts. As one designed to be a preacher of the gospel, he disentangled himself from the affairs of this life.

When such dispositions prevail, and are exercised according to the circumstances of the times, the testimony will have peculiar influence upon others.

Lord give of thy great power to all that preach thy gospel, and of thy great grace to all thy people; and let their conduct be such as shall procure them favour with all that know them.—(83.)

## CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1—11. *The death of Ananias and Sapphira.*

The signs and wonders which the apostles wrought, hitherto, were miracles of mercy; but here is an instance of severity, following the instances of goodness: God is to be both loved and feared.

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was,

1. That they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, when they were not true disciples. They sold a possession, and brought money, that they might seem not to be behind the chief of believers. Hypocrites may deny themselves, may forego their secular advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. But it

is often of fatal consequence for people to go greater lengths in profession than their inward principles admit.

2. That they were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence. They thought to serve both God and mammon—God by bringing part of the money to the apostles; and mammon, by keeping the other part. Their hearts were divided, so were they found faulty, Hos. 10. 2. If they had been thorough worldlings, they would not have sold their possession; and if they had been thorough christians, they would not have kept part of the price.

3. They thought to deceive the apostles, and make them believe they brought the whole purchase money, when really it was but a part. They dissembled with God and his Spirit, with Christ and his church and ministers.

The Spirit of God in Peter not only discovered the fact without any information, but likewise discerned the principle of reigning infidelity in the heart of Ananias. He knew that his heart was fully set in him to do this evil.

Observe the original of this sin, Satan filled his heart. Not only suggested it to him, but hurried him on with resolution to do it. And the sin itself. He lied unto the Holy Ghost. Those that lied to the apostles, who acted and were acting by the Spirit of God, are said to lie to God, because the apostles acted by the power and authority of God. From whence it follows, as Whitby well observes, that the power and authority of the Spirit must be the power and authority of God.

The words of St. Peter fully prove that the agency of Satan is not fictitious. If there had been no devil, as some wish and perhaps feel it their interest to believe, or if this devil had no influence on the souls of men, Peter, under the agency of the Holy Spirit, could not have expressed himself in this way.—(11.)

Peter's words implied that whatever Satan might suggest, he could not have filled the heart of Ananias with this wickedness had he not been consenting. The falsehood was an attempt to impose upon the Spirit of truth, who so manifestly spoke and acted by the apostles, and this was to lie unto God and not unto men, which is a plain testimony to the Godhead and to the Personality of the Holy Spirit. This liberality was not required of the primitive christians, but was

the result of their abundant love and zeal. Thus the crime of Ananias was not the retaining part of the price of the land, but endeavouring, in so solemn a transaction, to impose upon the apostles with a deliberate lie, proceeding from ostentation combined with covetousness.

This guilt, thus aggravated, is charged upon him. If we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall prove in the end to have put a fatal cheat upon our own souls. Ananias died upon the spot. He was speechless, he was struck dead, as Sapphira afterwards was; persisting in the same aggravated falsehood, she was also struck dead by the same awful Divine judgment. How sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good, hardening one another in that which is evil!

See the power of the word of God in the mouth of the apostles! As it was to some a savour of life unto life, so it was to others a savour of death unto death. As there are those whom the gospel justifies, so there are those it condemns.

This severity was not only righteous, considering the complication of vain glory and covetousness, of fraud and impiety, which the action contained, but also was wise and gracious, as it vindicated the honour of the blessed Spirit, insulted by this attempt to impose upon those who had so lately been partakers of his extraordinary effusions.—(80.)

In no state has the church yet been free from false professors and other evils resulting from human depravity and the subtilty of Satan. Nor is there any thing so excellent which hypocrites will not counterfeit to gratify their love of the praise of men; but God sees all their secret wickedness and will expose and punish it.

And this punishment was in reality mercy to vast numbers. It excited reverential fear and holy jealousy in the whole company of believers. It was not a check to their holy joy, but it taught them to be serious in it, and to rejoice with trembling. It would cause strict self-examination, prayer, circumspection, and dread of hypocrisy, covetousness, and vain glory. It would prevent the increase of false professors, and thus honour the gospel in the eyes of the people. This judgment, also, was evidence of the apostles' integrity and truth, even to their enemies. God never would have inflicted such a

judgment, if their testimony to the resurrection of Jesus had been a deception; and it showed they would not conceal or wink at iniquity in any who professed to be of their party.

Let us hence learn how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and not only shun a direct lie, but all advantages from the use of doubtful expressions—in a word, all equivocation. Thus Satan deludes the hearts he fills. God only knows how soon treacherous lips may be sealed in eternal silence. While we avoid all kinds and arts of dissimulation, let us particularly detest those which offer a double insult to God by taking their dress from the religion of his Son.—(80.)

9. "Will carry thee out." It is not a threat, but a prediction.

Ver. 12—16. *The power which accompanied the preaching of the gospel.*

While just severity was in one instance miraculously exercised, the power of God, by the hands of the apostles, was continually exerted in wonders of mercy.

The church was kept together, and confirmed in adherence to the apostles, and to one another. They met in the temple courts, in the place called Solomon's porch. God inclined the rulers to tolerate them awhile. They were there with one accord, unanimous in their doctrine, worship, and discipline. The separation of hypocrites by distinguishing judgments, should make the sincere cleave closer to each other and to the gospel ministry.

None who were not willing to renounce all for Christ, ventured to join them, but numbers of real converts were continually added by faith to the Lord.

Believers are added to the Lord Jesus, joined to him, and so joined in his mystical body, from which nothing can separate and cut off, but that which separates and cuts off from Christ. Notice is taken of the conversion of women as well as men, more than generally was in the Jewish church. As among those that followed Christ while he was upon earth, so among those who believed on him after he went to heaven, notice is taken of the pious women.

The power of God so evidently attended the apostles, that the people from some distance around, came to the city seeking for miraculous cures.

Whatever tends to the purity and reputation of the church promotes its enlargement; but that power alone, which wrought



such astonishing miracles by the hands of the apostles, can rescue sinners from the power of sin and Satan, and add believers to His worshippers. He will, in some degree, work by all his faithful servants; and every one who applies to Him, shall certainly be healed.

15. There is not evidence here that Peter's shadow healed any one.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 17—25. *The apostles imprisoned, and liberated by an angel.*

In these verses we have the malice of hell, and the grace of Heaven, struggling about the apostles; the one to drive them off from their good work, the other to animate them in it.

Observe, their persecutors were the saducees, who had particular enmity to the gospel of Christ, because it confirmed and established the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, which they denied. It is not strange if men of no religion are bigoted in opposition to true religion.

They put the apostles in the common prison, among the worst malefactors; thus they kept them from going on in their work. Thus early were the ambassadors of Christ in bonds. But the Lord will never desert his witnesses.

The angel of the Lord by night, notwithstanding the vigilance and resolution of the keepers, brought forth the prisoners, gave them authority to go out, and led them through all opposition. There is no prison so dark, so strong, but God can visit his people in it, and, if he pleases, fetch them out. When miraculously set at liberty, it was not that they might save their lives by making their escape out of the hands of their enemies—it was that they might go on with their work with the more boldness. Recoveries from sickness, releases out of trouble, are granted, not that we may enjoy the comforts of life, but that God may be honoured with the services of our life. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, Psa. 119. 175. Bring my soul out of prison, as the apostles here, that I may praise thy name, Psa. 142. 7.*

Observe, 1. Where they must preach; Speak in the temple. It is not for the preachers of Christ's gospel to retire into corners, as long as they can have any opportunity of preaching in the great congregation. 2. To whom they must preach; not to the princes and rulers, for they will not hearken; but to the people, who

are willing and desirous to be taught, and whose souls are as precious to Christ as the souls of the greatest. Speak to all, for all are concerned. 3. How they must preach; Speak as those who resolve to stand to it, to live and die by it. 4. What they must speak; All the words of this life, that others may be comforted with the same comforts with which you yourselves are comforted of God. Of this life, this heavenly Divine life, in comparison with which the present earthly life does not deserve the name. These words of life, the very same you have preached, these words which the Holy Ghost puts into your mouth. The words of the gospel are the words of life; words whereby we may be saved. The gospel is concerning matters of life and death, ministers must preach it, and people hear it accordingly. They must speak all the words of this life, and not conceal any. Christ's witnesses speak the whole truth, by which alone sinners can obtain eternal life.

Now that the angel ordered them to preach in the temple, their way was plain, and they feared not the face of man. If we may be satisfied concerning our duty, our business is to keep close to that, then we may cheerfully trust God with our safety. They set themselves immediately to their work. When God gives opportunity of doing good, though we are under the restraint and terror of human powers, we should venture far, rather than let go such an opportunity.

The high-priest and his party held a great and extraordinary council, but they were extremely perplexed by the report brought to them that the prisoners were gone from the prison, though it had been safely guarded, and that they were preaching in the temple. These things evidently showed their deliverance had been miraculous, and that they were not afraid of their persecutors. Their openly preaching confounded the persecutors more than any thing else. Common malefactors may have art enough to break prison; but those are uncommon ones who have courage to avow it when done.

How wretched are they whose vexation is increased by the success of the gospel, but their efforts to restrain its progress are vain. Yet such men will sometimes maintain an obstinate contest with their Creator! They cannot but see that the word and the power of the Lord are

against them, and they tremble for the consequences, yet they will proceed.

Ver. 26—33. *The apostles testify to Christ before the council.*

Here we have the seizing of the apostles a second time. They brought them without violence, for fear of the people, who had such a veneration for the apostles, that they would resent it if they offered them any abuse. The rulers feared, lest the apostles' preaching that the Person whom they had crucified was the Messiah, should exasperate the people, and they charged the apostles with intending to excite an insurrection against them.

See how those who with presumption will do an evil thing, yet cannot bear to hear of it afterward, or to have it charged upon them. They could cry daringly enough, His blood be upon us, and upon our children. But now they take it as a heinous affront to have Christ's blood laid to them. Thus they are convicted and condemned by their own consciences, and dread lying under that guilt in which they were not afraid to involve themselves.

Peter and the other apostles all spake to the same purport; as one and the same Spirit gave them utterance, depending on the promise their Master had made them. They justified themselves in disobedience to the sanhedrim, great as it was; though, in preaching Christ, they reflected upon it. We ought to obey God rather than men.

The chief priests are plainly told of the indignities they did unto Jesus. They are told also what honours God put upon Him. He raised him up; that is, he qualified him for, and called him to his great undertaking. He exalted him with his right hand. He has appointed him to be a Prince and a Saviour, and therefore we ought to preach in his name, and to publish the laws of his government as he is a Prince, and the offers of his grace as he is a Saviour. We cannot expect to be redeemed and healed by him, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled by him. Faith takes an entire Christ, who came, not to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins. He is appointed as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins. Had Christ been exalted to give deliverance and dominion to Israel, the chief priests would have welcomed him. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither value nor see their need

of; therefore they, by no means, admit his doctrine.

Observe here, First, Wherever repentance is wrought, remission is, without fail, granted. None are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, but those who are freed from the power and dominion of sin; who are turned from it, and turned against it. Secondly, It is Jesus Christ that gives, and is authorized to give, both repentance and remission. Whatsoever is required in the gospel-covenant, is promised. Are we appointed to repent? Christ is appointed to give repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work contrition for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The new heart is his work, and the broken spirit a sacrifice of his providing; and when he has given repentance, if he should not give remission, he would forsake the work of his own hands. See how necessary it is that we apply to Christ, by faith, for his grace to work repentance in us.

All this is well attested, First, By the apostles themselves; that they saw him alive after his resurrection, and saw him ascend into heaven; and also that they experienced the power of his grace upon their hearts, raising them to that which was far above their natural capacities. Secondly, By the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is a Witness from heaven; for God hath given his gifts and graces to those who obey Christ. And they must preach in this name, because the giving of the Holy Ghost to obedient believers, not only to bring them to the obedience of faith, but to make them eminently useful therein, is a very strong proof of the truth of christianity. The great work of the Spirit being, not only to justify Christ, 1 Tim. 3. 16, but to glorify him; and all his gifts having a direct tendency to exalt his name, proves that his doctrine is Divine. And, Lastly, The giving of the Holy Ghost is plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed.

The council were angry to see their own sin set before them; they take counsel to slay the apostles. While they went on in the service of Christ, with holy security and serenity of mind, perfectly composed, their persecutors went on in opposition to Christ, with constant perplexity of mind, and vexation to themselves. And Christ will surely destroy

those who will not have Him to reign over them.

31. To give place or room for repentance.—*Doddridge.*

Ver. 34—42. *The advice of Gamaliel. They let the apostles go.*

Gamaliel, one of the pharisees, whose reputation is great among the Jews to this day, and who seems to have had great judgment and prudence in mere secular matters, advised the council against attempting to put the apostles to death. He decidedly opposed the proceedings of the sadducees; and, from recent instances of Theudas and Judas of Galilee, showed that their interference was not needful, nor safe. Impostors abounded in that age, supported by vain expectations that the Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom, but had soon been defeated.

From these facts Gamaliel justly inferred, that if the apostles were propagating a falsehood, it would come to nothing, without the council incurring the displeasure of the people. But if, on the other hand, it was the work of God, they could not possibly prevail against it, even if they succeeded in putting the apostles to death. The council assented to Gamaliel's advice, though their enmity prevailed, so that they caused the apostles to be scourged, and again forbade them to preach Christ.

When the apostles were reviled, they reviled not again; when they suffered, they threatened not, but committed their cause to Him, to whom Gamaliel had referred it, even to the God who judgeth righteously. The Lord still has all hearts in his hands, and sometimes directs the prudence of the worldly wise, so as to restrain the persecutors. Common sense suggests caution, while experience and observation show that the success of religious impostures has been very short.

They bore their sufferings with invincible cheerfulness; instead of being ashamed of Christ, and their relation to him, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Reproach for Christ is true preferment, as it makes us conformable to his pattern, and serviceable to his interest. They rejoiced in it. If we suffer ill for doing well, provided we suffer it well, and as we should, we ought to rejoice in that grace which enabled us so to do.

They went on in their work with indefatigable diligence; they preached daily,

both publicly in the temple, and privately in every house. They visited the families of those under their charge, and gave particular instruction to them, according as their cases required. They preached Jesus Christ; they preached concerning him. They did not preach themselves, but Christ. This was the preaching that most offended the priests; they were willing that they should preach any thing but Christ. It ought to be the constant business of gospel ministers to preach Christ; Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified; nothing beside this, but what has reference to it.

Whether the enmity of the carnal mind be restrained or not, we should rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame and pain in the cause of Christ. We should daily endeavour to declare his salvation to those around us. Jesus, the anointed Saviour of lost sinners, should be the great subject of all instructions, the centre of all doctrines and exhortations, and the favourite theme of social conversations; whatever is our station or rank in life, we should seek to make Him known, and to glorify his name.

34. Gamaliel is mentioned in the Jewish Talmuds as very eminent for learning and influence. He was president of the council, and the second that obtained the distinguished title of Rabban. Gamaliel was one of the fathers of tradition, one who received the oral law and delivered it to others; the Jews rank him as the five and thirtieth in this succession. He was the instructor of Paul, and so eminent for his strictness, that at his death it was said that the glory of the law ceased, and pharisaism itself died. His death took place about eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem, when he was honoured with a very magnificent funeral.

36. *Josephus* mentions a Theudas whose insurrection took place seven years after this speech of Gamaliel, but there probably was another of the same name, as there were four leaders of insurrections named Simon, within forty years, and three named Judas, within ten years. *Josephus* relates that many leaders took up arms when Cyrenius made the enrolment and taxing

## CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1—7. *The appointment of deacons.*

Hitherto the disciples had been of one accord; this often had been taken notice of to their honour; but now they were multiplied, they began to murmur, Isa. 9. 3. The Jews, and proselytes from various parts of Greece, many of whom being at Jerusalem at the feast, embraced the faith of Christ, complained against the Hebrews, the native Jews.

The complaint was, that in the distribution of the public charity, the Hebrew widows had most care taken of them. In the best ordered church in the world there will be something amiss; some grievances, or at least some complaints. Some persons must be chosen to manage this matter, who had more leisure to attend to it than the apostles, and were better qualified for the trust than those whom the apostles employed.

The apostles called the multitude of the disciples unto them. They urge that serving tables was foreign to the business they were called to. They were to preach the word of God, and that was enough to employ all their thoughts, cares, and time. While the number of the disciples was few, the apostles might manage this without making it any considerable interruption of their main business; but now they could not. Preaching the gospel is the most proper and needful work that a minister can be employed in, and that which he must give himself wholly to; he must not entangle himself in the outward business of God's house, Neh. 11. 16.

The apostles therefore desire that seven men might be chosen, whose business it should be to serve tables—"to be deacons to the tables." These persons must be duly qualified. Those who are employed in any office of the church, ought to be men of blameless character, which is requisite, not only to the credit of their office, but to the due discharge of it. They must be filled with those gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which were necessary to the right management of this trust; men of truth, and hating covetousness. They must be discreet, judicious men, who would order things for the best, and with consideration; full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom; that is, of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of wisdom.

The people must nominate the persons; Look out among you seven men, consider among yourselves who are the fittest for such a trust, and whom you can with the most satisfaction confide in. They might be presumed to know better than the apostles what character men had, and are therefore intrusted with the choice.

The apostles will give them their charge, that they may know what they have to do, and make conscience of doing it; and give them their authority, that the persons concerned may know to whom

they are to apply and submit, in affairs of that nature; men whom we may appoint.

The evangelist does not give a particular account of this office, but only touches on the chief heads of early ecclesiastical history, leaving ample field for enlargement, reflection, and conjecture, on what is by him so succinctly narrated.—(75.)

The apostles engage to apply wholly to their work as ministers, and more closely. See here what are the two great gospel ordinances—the word and prayer. By these the kingdom of Christ must be advanced, and additions to it made. See what the great business of gospel ministers is, to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word; they must be either furnishing themselves for those services, or employing themselves in them; and such Christ will always be with, even to the end of the world. This proposal was agreed to by the disciples. It pleased them to see the apostles willing to discharge themselves from intermeddling in secular affairs, it pleased them to hear that they would give themselves to the word and prayer. We have a list of the persons chosen.

The first named is Stephen, he had a strong faith in the doctrine of Christ, and was more full of it than most; for he was full of the Holy Ghost, of his gifts and graces. He was an extraordinary man, and excelled in every thing that was good. The apostles appointed them to this work of serving tables. They prayed with them, and for them, that God would qualify them for the service to which they were called, and own them in it, and make them thereby a blessing to the church, particularly to the poor of the flock. All who are employed in the service of the church, ought to be committed to the conduct of the Divine grace by the prayers of the church. They laid their hands on them, that is, they blessed them in the name of the Lord; laying on hands was used in blessing. Having by prayer implored a blessing upon them, by the laying on of hands, they assured them the blessing was conferred in answer to the prayer.

When matters were thus put into good order in the church, then, 1. The word of God increased. Ministers' disentangling themselves from secular employments, and addicting themselves entirely and vigorously to their work, will contribute very much, as a means, to the success of the gospel. 2. Christians grew nume-

rous. When Christ was upon earth, his ministry had little success in Jerusalem; yet now that city afforded most converts. 3. Many of the priests were obedient to the faith. The word and grace of God is greatly magnified, when those are wrought upon by it, who were least likely. The priests, whose preferments arose from the law of Moses, were willing to let them go for the gospel of Christ. Faith is an act of obedience; for this is God's commandment, that we believe, 1 John 3. 23. They evidenced the sincerity of their believing the gospel of Christ, by cheerful compliance with all the rules and precepts of the gospel. When teachers who have been blind, prejudiced, or careless, become obedient to the faith, it may be considered as a peculiar triumph of Divine grace, and an important advantage to the church.

1. It was a Jewish custom to distribute alms daily.

3. *J. J. Blunt*, in his work on the undesigned coincidences of scripture, remarks, that the appointment of the deacons arose from the murmuring of the Grecians, and all the seven appointed to the office appear, from their names, to have been Grecians; thus manifestly showing the desire of the church to preserve harmony.

*Paley* observes, that the apostles' committing the management of the property given to the church, to the hands of persons not appointed by themselves, but by the society at large, is an indisputable proof that pecuniary gain was not their object.

Ver. 8—15. *Stephen falsely accused of blasphemy.*

There were synagogues at Jerusalem belonging to different descriptions of strangers; each of these had students belonging to it. The teachers of those here mentioned, or their most forward scholars, disputed with Stephen concerning the christian doctrines. But they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. He proved by such irresistible arguments, that Jesus is the Christ, that they had nothing to object against what he said: though not convinced, yet they were confounded. It is not said, They were not able to resist him, but, They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake, that Spirit of wisdom which spake by him. When they could not answer his arguments as a disputant, they prosecuted him as a criminal, and suborned witnesses against him. "On such terms," saith *Baxter*, "do we dispute with malignant men. And it is next to a miracle of providence, that no greater number of religious persons have been murdered in the

world, by the way of perjury and pretence of law, when so many thousands hate them, who make no conscience of false oaths."

They bribed some unprincipled persons to accuse Stephen, so that he was seized and charged with blasphemy, for having said that Jesus of Nazareth had declared he would destroy the temple and do away the law of Moses. No doubt he had spoken of the destruction that should come on the Jewish nation if they persisted in their opposition to the truth, but there was no blasphemy in his words as he had spoken them. He had said, This Jesus shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. It was expected that in the days of the Messiah they should be changed, that the shadows should be done away when the substance was come; yet this was no essential change of the law, but the perfecting it; Christ came, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law.

When the members of the council looked on Stephen, probably expecting to see signs of guilt and terror in his countenance, they beheld him serene and unmoved, so that he appeared rather like an angel than a man. Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, yet will not secure men from the greatest indignities.

What shall we say of man—a rational being, yet attempting to sustain a religious system by perjury and murder! And this has been done in numberless instances. But the blame rests not so much upon the understanding, as upon the heart of a fallen creature, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Yet the servant of the Lord, possessing a clear conscience, cheerful hope, and Divine consolations, may smile in the midst of danger and death.

9. The word "Libertines," is generally considered to denote Roman slaves who had been made free, or their descendants. Among the persons of this description at Rome, there were many who professed the Jewish religion. This appears from *Tacitus* and *Suetonius*, who also mention the banishment of proselytes to that faith from Rome, about fifteen years before the period of which Luke here speaks. *Tacitus* relates that 4000 of them, who were able to carry arms, were sent to Sardinia, and the rest ordered to renounce their religion or to depart by a certain day, which accounts for their being so numerous at Jerusalem as to have a synagogue built for their use.

15. There is nothing to lead us to suppose that this was a supernatural glory like that of Moses; but the majesty and innocence which shone forth in the countenance of this great protomartyr, can only be ascribed to the power of the Holy Spirit.—*Bloomfield*.

# CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1-16. *Stephen's defence.*

The high priest called on Stephen to answer for himself. From this discourse he appears to have been a man ready in the scriptures. Those who are full of the Holy Ghost, will be full of the scriptures, as Stephen was.

He gives respectful titles to the council, signifying his expectation of fair treatment. His discourse is to show that God had a church in the world many ages before that holy place was founded, and the ceremonial law given, and he would have one when both these should have had their end. These verses extend through the book of Genesis. He begins with the call of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. Let us see what reference this has to Stephen's case.

1. They had charged him as a blasphemer of God, and an apostate from the church; therefore he shows that he is a son of Abraham, and values himself on it. He also shows that he owns Divine revelation, particularly that by which the Jewish church was founded. 2. They were proud of being circumcised; therefore he shows that Abraham was taken under God's care, and into communion with him, before he was circumcised. 3. They were jealous for the holy place. He tells them to think of the meanness of their origin, and how they are entirely indebted to Divine grace, then they will see boasting for ever excluded.

He notices the unsettled state of Abraham and his seed, for many ages after he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. This teaches that known unto God are all his works beforehand. That God's promises will be fulfilled in the season, though perhaps not so soon as we expect. That though the people of God may be in distress for a time, yet God will at length rescue them, and reckon with those that oppress them.

Stephen hence could show that the Jewish nation, for the honour of which they were so jealous, was very inconsiderable in its beginnings. And what need is there of so much anxiety; as if their ruin, when they bring it upon themselves by sin, must be the ruin of the world, and of all God's interest in it? The slow steps by which the promise made to Abraham advanced toward the performance, plainly show that it had a spiritual meaning,

and that the land principally intended was the better country, that is, the heavenly; which the apostle shows from this very argument, that the patriarchs sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country; thence inferring, that they looked for a city that had foundations, Heb. 11. 9, 10. He also notices the building up the family of Abraham, with the assurance of Divine grace to it, and the disposals of Divine Providence concerning it.

God engaged to be a God to Abraham and to his seed; and, in token of that, gave him the covenant of circumcision.

Joseph, the darling and blessing of his father's house, was abused by his brethren. Thus early did the children of Israel begin to envy those among them who were eminent, of which their enmity to Christ was a great instance. God owned Joseph in his troubles, and was with him by the influence of his Spirit; both on his own mind, by giving him comfort, and on those he was concerned with, by giving him favour in their eyes.

Jacob, with his sons, was compelled to go down into Egypt, by a famine which forced him out of Canaan. They died in Egypt, but were carried to be buried in Canaan. This is to Stephen's purpose. 1. He reminds them of their mean beginning, as a check to priding themselves in the glories of that nation. The prophets frequently put them in mind of the deliverance out of Egypt, as an aggravation of their contempt of the law of God; here it is urged as an aggravation of their contempt of the gospel of Christ. 2. He reminds them likewise of the wickedness of the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph; and the same spirit was still working in them toward Christ and his ministers. 3. Their fathers were long kept from the possession of their holy land, upon which they doted so much, and met with dearth and great affliction in it. 4. The faith of the patriarchs in desiring to be buried in the land of Canaan, plainly showed they had regard to the heavenly country, which it was the design of this Jesus to lead them to.

It is profitable to recur to the first rise of usages, or sentiments, which have been perverted. Would we know the nature and effects of justifying faith, we should study the character of the father of the faithful. His calling teaches the efficacy

and freeness of Divine grace, and the nature of conversion. Here also we see that outward forms and distinctions are as nothing compared with separation from the world and devotedness to God.

2. It is considered by many that Abraham had two distinct calls. The first as here recorded, when in Chaldaea; the second mentioned Gen. 12, when he had in consequence of the first call taken up his temporary residence in Haran. This was the Jewish tradition.

4. The Jews consider that by the death of Terah, Stephen alludes to his moral death; he having become a confirmed idolater, his son Abraham left him; but *Lloyd* and others consider that the age of Terah in Gen. 11. 26, only refers to the birth of Haran, and that he was 130 years old when he begat Abraham, whose name is put first for his superior dignity, so that Terah was dead when the latter left Haran.

6. Stephen here states, in round numbers, the period from the call of Abraham to the departure from Egypt. See note Exod. 12. 40. *Markland* considers that it was rather Stephen's purpose to relate how long Abraham's seed were to be sojourners, and in a foreign country; rather than how long they were to be in bondage and affliction. The passage ver. 6, 7, seems to have been cited by him from memory.

14. Here Stephen appears to quote the Greek version. Stephen's expression is "the kindred of Jacob." See note Gen. 46. 27.

16. *Owen* and others consider that the word "Abraham" has been here inserted by some transcriber, thinking the passage incomplete without a proper name, and not remembering that "he bought" referred to Jacob's purchase from the sons of Emmor, Gen. 33. 19. *Markland* renders, "And were carried over to Sychem, and afterwards from among the descendants of Emmor, the father or son of Sychem, they were laid in the sepulchre which Abraham bought for a sum of money." This agrees with the account of Josephus, that the bodies of the patriarchs were carried from Egypt, first to Sychem and afterwards to Hebron.

#### Ver. 17—29. Stephen's defence.

Stephen here relates the wonderful increase of the people of Israel in Egypt. It was when the time of the promise drew nigh; the time when they were to be formed into a people. Let us not be discouraged at the slowness of the proceedings towards the accomplishment of God's promises. It was in Egypt, where they were oppressed, and where their lives were made so bitter to them. Suffering times often are growing times with the church.

When the Egyptians observed them increase in number, they increased their burdens: in which Stephen observes, 1. Their base ingratitude. They did not consider the good service Joseph had done to that nation. 2. Their hellish craft and policy. But those are in a

great mistake, who think they deal wisely for themselves, when they deal deceitfully or unmercifully with their brethren. 3. Their inhuman cruelty. That they might extirpate them, they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. The Jewish rulers might see how mean their beginnings were, and how much they were indebted to God for his care, of which they had made themselves unworthy; also that what they were now doing against the christian church in its infancy, was as impious and unjust, and would be in the issue as ineffectual, as what the Egyptians did against the Jewish church in its infancy.

Stephen was charged with having spoken blasphemous words against Moses, in answer to which charge he here speaks very honourably of him. Moses was born when the persecution of Israel was most severe. God is preparing for his people's deliverance when their day is darkest, and their distress deepest. He was exceeding fair, "fair toward God," he was sanctified from the birth, and that made him beautiful in God's eyes; for it is the beauty of holiness which is in God's sight of great price. He was wonderfully preserved in his infancy; for God will take special care of those of whom he designs to make special use. And did he thus protect the child Moses? Much more will he secure the interests of his holy child Jesus, ch. 4. 27, from the enemies who are gathered together against him. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who were then famed for all manner of literature. He became a minister of state in Egypt. Though he had not a ready way of expressing himself, every thing he said carried force of reason along with it. And in business, none went on with such courage, ability, and success. Thus was he prepared, by human helps, for those services, for which, after all, he could not be thoroughly fitted without Divine illumination. By this, Stephen shows that he had high and honourable thoughts of Moses.

Stephen insists much upon the attempts Moses made to deliver Israel, and it serves for a key to the history, Exod. 2. 11, 15; as does also the faith and self-denial referred to by the apostle, Heb. 11. 24, 26. He showed himself as a public person, with a public character. 1. As Israel's saviour. Of this he gave a specimen in avenging an oppressed Israelite.

If they had understood the signs of the times, they might have taken this for the dawning of the day of their deliverance; but they did not take it as it was designed. 2. As Israel's judge. Of this he gave a specimen the very next day, in offering to accommodate matters between two contending Hebrews, wherein he plainly assumed a public character. But proud and litigious spirits are impatient of check and control. Hereupon Moses fled to the land of Midian, and made no more attempts to deliver Israel for forty years.

They having charged Stephen with blaspheming Moses, in his answer he charges upon them the indignities their fathers did to Moses. They persecuted him for disputing in defence of Christ and his gospel; in opposition to this they set up Moses and his law. They may understand, if they do not wilfully shut their eyes against the light, that God will, by this Jesus, deliver them out of a worse slavery than that of Egypt. Take heed then of thrusting him away, but receive him as a Ruler and Judge. Also lest they fare as their fathers, who for this were justly left to die in their slavery, for the deliverance came not till forty years after. You will not have Christ, and you shall not have him, so shall your doom be, Matt. 23. 38, 39.

Although men thus prolong their own miseries, yet the Lord will take care of his servants, and effect his own designs of mercy. He often renders despised persons the means of saving those who condemned them, even as the crucified Jesus was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness to Israel.

Ver. 30—41. *Stephen's defence.*

Stephen proceeds in his history of Moses, and nothing could be spoken more honourably of him. Observe,

1. The vision which Moses saw of the glory of God at the bush. Men deceive themselves, if they think God is tied to places; he can bring his people into a wilderness, and there speak comfortably to them. He appeared to Moses in a flame of fire; for our God is a consuming fire; yet the bush in which this fire was, though combustible matter, was not consumed; which represented the state of Israel in Egypt, where, though they were in the fire of affliction, yet they were not

consumed. It may also be looked upon as a type of Christ's incarnation, and the union between the Divine and human nature. Moses wondered at the sight, and he trembled and durst not behold, for he was soon aware that it was not a fiery meteor, but the angel of the Lord; and no other than the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God himself.

2. The declaration he heard of the covenant of God; "I am the same that I was." I am, as I was, the God of Abraham, and now I will make it appear so; for all the favours, all the honours God put upon Israel, were founded upon this covenant with Abraham, and flowed from it. "I will be the same that I am." As the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cannot break the covenant relation between God and them, so nothing else can. Our Saviour by this proves the future state, Matt. 22. 31. Abraham is dead, and yet God is still his God, therefore Abraham is still alive. Now this is that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, for the full conviction of the sadducees, who denied it. God, in declaring himself thus the God of their fathers, intimated his kindness to their seed, that they should be loved for the fathers' sakes, Rom. 11. 28; Deut. 7. 8. The preachers of the gospel preached this covenant; and shall they, under colour of supporting the holy place and the law, oppose the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, before the law was given, and long before the holy place was built?

3. The commission God gave him to deliver Israel. Stephen here shows that Moses was an eminent type of Christ, as he was Israel's deliverer. When God had declared himself the God of Abraham, he proceeded to order Moses into a reverent posture, and to appoint him to a very eminent service. Observe, God has compassionate regard to the troubles of his church, and the groans of his persecuted people; and their deliverance takes rise from his pity. It should seem, though God is present in all places, yet he uses the expression here of coming down to deliver them, because that deliverance was typical of what Christ did, when, for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.

4. His acting in pursuance of this commission, wherein he was a figure of the Messiah. And Stephen notices here



again the slights they had put upon him, the affronts they had given him, and their refusal to have him reign over them, as tending very much to magnify his agency in their deliverance. By this example Stephen would intimate to the council, That this Jesus whom they now refused, as their fathers did Moses, even this same has God advanced to be a Prince and a Saviour, a Ruler and a Deliverer. It does not at all derogate from the just honour of Moses to say, that he was but an instrument, and that he is infinitely outshone by Jesus.

5. His prophecy of Christ and his grace. Moses not only was a type of Christ, but spake of him. This is one of the greatest honours God put upon him, and which exceeded all the rest, that by him he gave notice to the children of Israel, of the great Prophet who should come into the world. This is very much to Stephen's purpose. In asserting that Jesus should change the customs of the ceremonial law, he was so far from blaspheming Moses, that really he honoured him, by showing how the prophecy of Moses was accomplished, which was so clear, that, as Christ told them himself, If they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, John 5. 46.

6. Moses continued to do eminent services to the people of Israel, after he had been instrumental in bringing them out of Egypt. Herein also he was a type of Christ. It was the honour of Moses that he was in the church in the wilderness; he was king in Jeshurun, Deut. 33. 5. But Christ is the President and Guide of a more excellent and glorious church than that in the wilderness, and is more in it, as the life and soul of it, than Moses could be in that. He was in the church with the Angel, without whom he could have done no service to the church; but Christ is himself that Angel, who was with the church in the wilderness, and therefore has authority above Moses. The words of God are oracles, certain and infallible, and by them all controversies must be determined. They are lively oracles, for the word that God speaks is spirit and life; not that the law of Moses could give life, but it showed the way to life. The lively oracles which he received from God, he faithfully gave to the people, to be observed and preserved. As Moses gave them not that bread, so neither did he give them that law from hea-

ven, John 6. 32; but God who gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, change the custom by his son Jesus.

7. After this, and notwithstanding this, the people murmured at him, refused to obey, and were ready to stone him. Their secret disaffection to Moses, and inclination to Egypt, were turning back to Egypt in heart. Many who pretend to go forwards toward Canaan, by keeping up a show and profession of religion, are in their hearts turning back, and will be dealt with as deserters, for it is the heart that God looks at. If the customs Moses delivered could not change them, wonder not that Christ changes the customs, and introduces a more spiritual worship. The people made a golden calf, which, beside the affront thereby done to God, was a great indignity to Moses. They offered sacrifices unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands. By all this it appears that there was a great deal which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. It was therefore necessary that this law should be perfected by a better hand, and he was no blasphemer against Moses who said that Christ had done it.

As Israel thrust Moses from them, and would have returned to their bondage, so men in general will not obey Jesus, because they love this present evil world, and rejoice in their own works and imaginations.

36. "Showing."—*Scholefield.*

Ver. 42—50. *Stephen's defence.*

In these verses, 1. Stephen upbraids the Jews with the idolatry of their fathers, to which God gave them up as a punishment for their early forsaking him. For this he quotes Amos 5. 25; who upbraids them for not sacrificing to their own God in the wilderness. It was God's condescension, that he did not insist upon it during their unsettled state; but let them consider how ill they requited him, in offering sacrifices to idols, when God dispensed with their offering to him. This is also a check to their zeal for the customs Moses delivered, and their fear of having them changed by this Jesus, that immediately after they were delivered, they were disused for forty years together. And for sacrificing to other gods after they came to Canaan. For this it is threatened, I will carry you away beyond

Babylon. Let it not seem strange to them, to hear of the destruction of this place, for they had heard of it many times from the prophets of the Old Testament, who were not therefore accused as blasphemers by any but wicked rulers. It was observed, Jer. 26. 18, 19, that Micah was not called to account, though he prophesied, saying, Zion shall be ploughed as a field.

2. Stephen answers particularly to the charge exhibited against him relating to the temple, that he spake blasphemous words against that holy place. It was not till our fathers came into the wilderness, in their way to Canaan, that they had any fixed place of worship; and He that was worshipped without a holy place, in the first and best ages of the Old Testament church, may and will be so when this holy place is destroyed, without any diminution of his glory. The holy place was at first but a tabernacle, mean and movable. Why might not this holy place, though built of stones, be brought to an end, as well as that? It was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple, so it is now that the material temple gives way to the spiritual one, and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual temple shall give way to the eternal one.

This was the glory both of the tabernacle and temple, that they were erected for a testimony of that temple of God, which in the latter days should be opened in heaven, Rev. 11. 19; and of Christ's tabernacling on earth, as it is John 1. 14; and of the temple of his body.

That tabernacle was framed as God appointed. Its rise being heavenly, its meaning and tendency were so; and therefore it was no diminution to its glory, to say, that this temple, made with hands, should be destroyed, in order to build another made without hands.

That tabernacle was pitched first in the wilderness, not in the land to which they seemed to think it must for ever be confined. Why might not God set up his spiritual temple, as he had done the material tabernacle, in countries then possessed by the Gentiles? That tabernacle was brought in by those who came with Jesus, that is, Joshua. If we would have Jesus for a deliverer, we must submit to him as a ruler, that we may be brought into the promised rest.

That tabernacle continued above four

hundred years, before there was any thought of building a temple. And God had his heart so little upon a temple, or such a holy place as they were so jealous for, that when David desired to build one, he was forbidden to do it. David had all that sweet communion with God in public worship, of which we read in his psalms, before there was any temple built. Solomon, when he dedicated the temple, acknowledged that God dwelleth not in the temples made with hands; he has not need of them, is not benefited by them, cannot be confined to them. The whole world is his temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; what occasion has He then for a temple to manifest himself in? Hath not my hand made all these things? And these things show his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. 1. 20; they so show themselves to all mankind, that those are without excuse who worship other gods. And as the world is thus God's temple, wherein he is manifested, so it is God's temple in which he will be worshipped; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him, Ps. 67. 7. It was therefore no reflection at all upon this holy place, to say that Jesus shall destroy this temple and set up another, into which all nations shall be admitted.

The whole scripture proclaims man to be a proud, ungrateful rebel against God; who works by various means and instruments, which men either neglect or idolize. But as heaven is his throne and the earth his footstool, so none of our services can profit Him who made all things. Next to the human nature of Christ, the broken and spiritual heart is His most valued temple.

43. This quotation from Amos 5. 26, is from the Greek version. It is supposed that the sun was worshipped under the name of Moloch; by its "tabernacle" is meant a small case or shrine. "Took up," denotes bearing it on the shoulders or placing it aloft as an object of worship. Remphan may mean Saturn. *Townsend* considers these names were given to the same idol, and that this was an act of idolatry subsequent to that of the golden calf, and originally designed to commemorate Noah and the deluge. Thus in fact they united another God with Jehovah, while they professed not to forsake his worship, but the proceeding can only be ascribed to carnal motives, which inclined them to the idolatrous rites of the Egyptians.

45. Instead of, "That came after," read, Having received by succession.—*Schokefield*.

Ver. 51—53. *Stephen reproves the Jews for the death of Christ.*

Stephen was going on, it seems, to show

that the temple and the temple-service must come to an end, and it would be the glory of both to give way to that worship of the Father in spirit and in truth, which was to be established in the kingdom of the Messiah. He was going to apply what he had said, more closely to his present purpose; but he perceived they could not bear it. They could hear the history of the Old Testament told; it was learning which they themselves dealt much in; but if Stephen tell them, that their power and tyranny must come down; and that the church must be governed by a spirit of holiness and love, and heavenly-mindedness, they will not hear him. It is probable that he perceived this, and that a tumult began to prevail which showed that he would not be permitted to bring his defence to a regular conclusion. Therefore he broke off abruptly, and by the spirit of wisdom, courage, and power, sharply rebuked his persecutors; for if they will not admit the testimony of the gospel to them, it shall become a testimony against them. When plain arguments and incontestable truths irritate the opposers of the truth, they should be shown their guilt and danger.

1. They, like their fathers, were stubborn and wilful, and would not be wrought upon by the various methods God took to reclaim and reform them. They were stiff-necked, and would not submit to the easy yoke of God's government. Their hearts and ears were not devoted to God, as they were in profession by the sign of circumcision. They had not that circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, Col. 2. 11.

2. They, like their fathers, were not only uninfluenced by all the methods God took to reform them, but they were enraged and incensed against them. Their fathers resisted the Holy Ghost in the prophets God raised up to them; and Christ's apostles and ministers spake by the same Spirit, and had greater measures of his gifts than the prophets of the Old Testament, yet were more resisted. They resisted the Holy Ghost striving with them by their own consciences, and would not comply with their convictions and dictates. They took part with their corruptions against their convictions, and rebelled against the light. There is that in our sinful hearts, which always resists the Holy Ghost, a flesh that lusts against the Spirit, and wars against his motions; but

in the hearts of God's elect, when the fullness of time comes, this resistance is overcome and overpowered; and after a struggle the throne of Christ is set up in the soul, and every thought that had exalted itself against him, is brought into captivity to him, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.

3. They, like their fathers, persecuted and slew those whom God sent to call them to duty, and make them offers of mercy. Their fathers had been cruel and constant persecutors of the Old Testament prophets. They had been the betrayers and murderers of the Just One himself. They hired Judas to betray him, and forced Pilate to condemn him. Thus they were the genuine seed of those who slew the prophets that foretold his coming. To which of the prophets would they have showed respect, who had no regard to the Son of God himself?

4. They, like their fathers, put contempt upon Divine revelation, and would not be guided and governed by it; and this was the aggravation of their sin, that God had given, as to their fathers his law, so to them his gospel, in vain. Their fathers received the law, and had not kept it, ver. 53. The law is said to be received by the disposition of angels, because angels were employed in the solemnity of giving the law. They received the gospel now, by the disposition, not of angels, but of the Holy Ghost; yet they did not embrace it. They would not yield to the plainest demonstrations, any more than their fathers before them, for they were resolved not to comply with God, either in his law or in his gospel.

Stephen probably would have said much more, if they would have suffered him.

He had shown that from the beginning God had in view the dispensation he was now opening, and that his designs were uniformly resisted by their impious forefathers. They saw most clearly from his statement, that they could expect no mercy if they proceeded to oppose Jesus of Nazareth, and that their temple and political existence must fall a sacrifice to their persevering obstinacy. Their guilt stung them to the heart, and they sought relief in a murderous act, rather than in sorrow and supplication for mercy.—(11.)

53. This passage appears to mean, "Ye who have received the law by the promulgation of angels," (as ministering instruments.)

Ver. 54—60. *The martyrdom of Stephen.*

The application is generally the most

useful part of a discourse, without which the rest makes but a transient impression; but when sinners are corrected, and not humbled, they will be exasperated.

The council were enraged, and full of fury against Stephen; but he, unmoved, looked up towards heaven, and was permitted to behold an extraordinary display of Divine glory; and to behold Jesus, as the Mediator, standing at the right hand of God, thus signifying his readiness to plead for his suffering disciple, and to receive his soul. He declared that a glorious scene was opened to his view, but the members of the council refused to listen, and declared him guilty of blasphemy. Immediately he was hurried out of the city, and stoned to death.

The witnesses, according to the Jewish law, first began to stone him. Laying aside their upper garments for that purpose, they gave them to the charge of a young man named Saul. This is the first mention of the apostle Paul. As a native of Cilicia he probably had taken part in the preceding disputation, and we find him sharing in the murder of the first martyr for the faith of Christ.

Here is proof of the exaltation of Christ to the Father's right hand; the apostles saw him ascend, but a cloud received him out of their sight. We are told that he sat down on the right hand of God; but was he ever seen there? Yes, Stephen saw him there, and was satisfied with the sight. Nothing is so comfortable to dying saints, nor so animating to suffering saints, as to see Jesus at the right hand of God: blessed be God, by faith we may see him there.

They stoned Stephen, calling upon Christ, for to Him this prayer undeniably was addressed. It is the comfort of those who are unjustly hated and persecuted by men, that they have a God to go to, an all sufficient God to call upon.

Stephen offered up two short prayers in his dying moments, and in them, as it were, breathed out his soul. 1. Here is a prayer for himself; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Thus Christ himself resigned his spirit into the hand of the Father. We are here taught to resign ours into the hands of Christ. Our Lord Jesus is God, to whom we are to seek, and in whom we are to confide and comfort ourselves, living and dying. Stephen here prays to Christ. To Christ we are to commit ourselves, who alone is able to

keep what we commit to him against that day; for there is no venturing into another world but under his conduct; no living comforts in dying moments, but what are fetched from him. Christ's receiving our spirits at death, is the great point we are to be careful about, and to comfort ourselves with. And if this has been our care while we live, it will be our comfort when we die.

2. Here is a prayer for his persecutors, ver. 60; Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Therein he followed the example of his dying Master, who set an example to all following sufferers in the cause of Christ, to pray for those that persecute them. Though the sin was very heinous, yet if they would lay it to their hearts, God would not lay it to their charge.

This prayer shows most forcibly the amiable, forgiving spirit of the martyr, yet we must not forget that this and all the excellent qualities with which the mind of this blessed man was endued, proceeded from that Holy Ghost of whose influences his mind was full. The Spirit influenced the heart of this martyr to pray for his destroyers, and could such prayers fail? No—Saul of Tarsus in all probability was the first fruits of them.—(11.)

As he was praying thus, the mortal blow came. Death is but a sleep to the real christian; not the sleep of the soul, but the sleep of the body: it is its rest from all griefs and toils. Stephen died as much in a hurry as ever any man did, yet, when he died, he fell asleep; he applied himself to his dying work with as much composure as if he had been going to sleep—he shall awake again in the morning of the resurrection.

Though we are not favoured with heavenly visions, we may by faith steadfastly fix our thoughts and affections on things above. Thus we may see the glory of God, and Jesus ever in the Father's presence, pleading for us, prepared to help us, and to receive our departing souls. Let us follow those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises, that while we live we may glorify Him; and that, whenever we die, we may fall asleep in his truth, power, and love, to be received into his presence, where is fullness of joy, and to share the pleasures that are at his right hand, for evermore.

59, 60. The object the martyr desired was the eternal salvation of his soul, his immediate reception to the state of purity and happiness, "to be with Christ, where he is, and to behold his

glory." He asked therefore, of the Lord Jesus, the *greatest good* that immortal existence can receive, or that even Omnipotent love can bestow! It is not a mere address to the Lord Jesus, but the incontrovertible meaning and purport of the words used by Stephen, was a prayer for the greatest of possible blessings, a petition equally preposterous and irreligious whether offered to a visible or an invisible Being, unless that Being were "over all, God blessed for ever." And it should be observed, this is the only circumstantial account of the death of a disciple of Christ, which it has pleased the wisdom of inspiration to preserve in the New Testament, though we are furnished with references to the death of Christians, remarkably impressed with the same character of a peculiar and distinguished respect to the Lord Jesus Christ; see 1 Cor. 15. 18; 1 Thess. 4. 14. 16. The second prayer offered to the same Person, is an intercession for the forgiveness of enormous sin; this blessing is implored from the Lord Jesus, thus proceeding on the belief of his right and power to forgive sins.—*J. P. Smith.*

In Rev. 22. 20, it is certain that Jesus is addressed in prayer, as he is here, in terms which necessarily imply Divine power, and nothing short of Deity.—*Bloomfield.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ver 1—4. *Saul persecutes the church.*

Saul, who was afterward called Paul, was consenting to Stephen's death. He consented to it with delight: so the word signifies. Devout men went and gathered up the poor crushed and broken remains, to which they gave a decent interment, and lamented over him.

Persecution was raised against the church in Jerusalem, which is no sooner planted than it is persecuted. Saul did all he could to lay it waste and ruin it. The effect of this persecution was, They were all scattered abroad. Though persecution may not drive us off from our work, yet it may send us to work elsewhere. The preachers were scattered, except the apostles, who probably were directed by the Spirit to continue at Jerusalem, they being, by the special providence of God, screened from the storm, or by the special grace of God enabled to face it.

It is evident the others fled merely in obedience to their Lord's command. Had they fled through the fear of death, they would not have provoked persecution to follow them by continuing to proclaim the same truths that provoked it in the first instance.—(11.)

Wherever the established believer is driven, he carries with him the knowledge of the gospel, and in one way or other makes known the preciousness of Christ in every place. Where a simple desire of

doing good influences the heart, it will be found impossible to exclude a man from all opportunity of usefulness.

1. *Tacitus*, a Roman historian, who lived at this period, relates that after the death of Christ his religion was suppressed for a time, but afterwards it broke out, not only in Judea, but through the whole world.

Ver. 5—13. *Philip's success at Samaria. Simon the sorcerer baptised.*

Observe what wonderful success Philip the evangelist, not the apostle, had in his preaching, and what reception he met with in the city of Samaria. The doctrine he preached, was Christ, he proclaimed Christ to them, so the word signifies, as a king is proclaimed throughout his dominions. The Samaritans expected the Messiah's coming, as appears by John 4. 25. Philip tells them that he is come, and that the Samaritans are welcome to him. Ministers' business is to preach Christ; Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified. The proofs he produced for the confirmation of his doctrine, were miracles; their nature suited the intention of his commission, and gave light and lustre to it.

1. He was sent to break the power of Satan; and, in token of that, unclean spirits being charged in the name of the Lord Jesus to remove, came out of many who were possessed with them, ver. 7. As far as the gospel prevails, evil spirits are dislodged, and particularly unclean spirits. All inclinations to the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul are such; for God has called us from uncleanness to holiness, 1 Thess. 4. 7.

2. He was sent to heal the minds of men; in token of that, many who were taken with palsies, and who were lame, were healed. Distempers are specified, the most difficult to be cured by the course of nature, and most expressive of the disease of sin, and of that moral impotency which the souls of men labour under as to the service of God.

The common people gave heed to Philip; a multitude of them, with one accord. The bringing of the gospel to any place is matter of joy, of great joy to that place. If it be received as it should be, it is glad tidings of great joy to all people, Luke 2. 10. One Simon Magus had gained a great interest among the people, and yet they believed the things that Philip spake. These Samaritans had of late been drawn to follow Simon, a sorcerer or magician. He gave out that he himself was some

great one, and would have all people respect him accordingly. He had no design to reform their lives, or to improve their worship and devotion, but only to make them believe that he was some Divine person. Pride, ambition, and affectation of grandeur have always caused abundance of mischief, both to the world and to the church. The people said of him, This man is the great power of God. See how ignorant, inconsiderate people mistake! Satan, by God's permission, filled their hearts to follow Simon. He did many signs and lying wonders, which seemed to be miracles, yet really were not so; but like those of the magicians of Egypt, and those of the man of sin, 2 Thess. 2. 9. Notwithstanding the influence Simon Magus had upon them, and the reluctance there generally is in people to own themselves in error, and to retract, yet, when they saw the difference between Simon and Philip, they gave heed no longer to the former. How strong is the power of Divine grace, by which they were brought to Christ, who is Truth itself! By that grace working with the word, those who had been led captive by Satan were brought into obedience to Christ. The people, not only gave heed to what Philip said, but at length were fully convinced that it was of God and not of man, and gave up themselves to be directed thereby.

What is yet more wonderful, Simon Magus himself became a convert to the faith of Christ, in show and profession, for a time. Simon himself believed also; he was convinced that Philip preached a true doctrine, because he saw it confirmed by real miracles. The conviction went so far, that he was admitted as other believers were, into the church, by baptism. Though he had been a wicked man, a sorcerer, a pretender to Divine honours, yet, upon his solemn profession of repentance for his sin, and of faith in Jesus Christ, he was baptized. He was a hypocrite, but it is God's prerogative alone to know the heart. Even bad men, and those whose hearts still go after covetousness, may possibly not only come before God as his people come, but continue with them. And many wonder at the proofs of Divine truths, who never experience their power.

The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward sanctification. All are not savingly converted who are proselyted

by the gospel. As there will be wheat and tares in the same field, corn and chaff on the same floor, so there will be some saints and some sinners in the purest earthly church.—(73.)

5. Doubtless Sychem, the principal seat of the Samaritan religion. The city of Samaria, properly so called, had been demolished some years before, and when rebuilt it was called Sebaste.

9. *Josephus* mentions Simon, a native of Cyprus, a pretender to magic. He appears to have been acquainted with natural philosophy, so as to be considerably above common astrologers, though he perverted his knowledge to a bad use, working on the minds of ignorant people, so that they regarded him as a being above the common order, and some think as the Messiah. It is, however, evident, as *Scott* considers, that Simon produced many extraordinary effects by Satanic influence, not merely by human imposture. He is mentioned by many of the ancient writers, and seems to have been a character of note at that period. He appears to have laid claim to the character of the mysterious Being who was universally expected at that time. He obtained considerable notice and some honours at Rome, though it is not probable to the extent some writers have related. Of his general character it is sufficient to observe, that *Josephus* relates he persuaded Drusilla to leave her husband to live with Felix.

— Bewitched, or, astonishing, amazing or confounding the judgment.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 14—25. *The hypocrisy of Simon detected.*

Two apostles were sent to Samaria to carry on the good work begun among the people; and to confer spiritual gifts with those heavenly graces that had enriched them. The Holy Ghost was as yet fallen upon none of them, in the extraordinary powers conveyed by the descent of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost. Those who are indeed given up to Christ, and have experienced the sanctifying influences and operations of the Spirit of grace, have great reason to be thankful, though they have not the highest gifts.

Now, in order to this, the apostles prayed for them. We may take encouragement from this example, in praying to God to give the renewing graces of the Holy Ghost to all for whose spiritual welfare we are concerned; for that includes all blessings. They laid their hands on them, to signify that their prayers were answered, and that the gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon them. None can now thus give the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands; but it may intimate to us, that we should use our best endeavours with those for whom we pray.

Upon this they discovered and discarded him that was a hypocrite among them, and that was Simon Magus. He

did not desire them to lay their hands on him that he might receive the Holy Ghost himself, but that they would convey to him a power to bestow the gift upon others. He was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but not at all solicitous to have the spirit and disposition of a christian. He was more desirous to gain honour to himself than to do good to others. In this he put a great affront upon the apostles, as if they were men who would do any thing for money, whereas they had left what they had for Christ. He showed that he aimed at the rewards of divination, like Balaam; for he would not have bid money for this power, if he had not hoped to get money by it. He showed that he never had his heart truly humbled, as he desired to be intrusted with a power Philip the evangelist had not, but the apostles only.

Peter shows him his crime. He esteemed the wealth of this world, as if it would answer for things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life. Peter shows him his character, which is inferred from his crime. This was such a fundamental error as could by no means consist with a state of grace. Therefore Peter tells him plainly, that his heart was not right in the sight of God. Our hearts are what they are in the sight of God, who cannot be deceived. And if they are not right in his sight, whatever are our pretensions, our religion is vain, and will stand us in no stead. A proud and covetous heart cannot be right with God. It is possible for a man to continue under the power of sin, yet put on a form of godliness.

The character here given of Simon is really the character of all wicked people. First, they are in the gall of bitterness: sin is an abominable thing which the Lord hates, and sinners are by it made abominable to him; indwelling sin is a root of bitterness. Secondly, They are in the bond of iniquity; bound under the dominion of Satan by the power of sin; and it is a sore bondage, like that in Egypt, making the life bitter.

The sense is, Thou art immersed in wickedness of the vilest sort, and fast bound in the chains of sin and Satan.— 5.)

Peter declares his doom in two things.

1. Thy money perish with thee. When tempted with money to do evil, we should see what a perishing thing money is, and

scorn to be biassed with it. He warns him of the danger of utter destruction if he continued in this mind.

2. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; nothing to do with the gifts of the Holy Ghost: thou dost not understand them, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God, if thou thinkest that christianity is a trade to live by in this world; therefore thou hast no part nor lot in the eternal life, in the other world which the gospel offers.

Peter gives Simon good counsel. He must repent; must see his error, must change his mind and way; must be humbled and ashamed for what he has done. Those that have said and done amiss, must, as far as they can, unsay it and undo it again by repentance. He must pray to God; must pray that God would give him repentance and pardon.

Observe what encouragement is given him to do this. There may be a great deal of wickedness in the thought of the heart, its false notions, and corrupt affections, and wicked projects, which must be repented of, or we are undone. But it shall be forgiven, upon our repentance. The doubt here is of the sincerity of his repentance, not of his pardon, if his repentance be sincere.

Simon was startled. Here was something well; that he was affected with the reproof given him. And something wanting; he did not pray for himself. His concern is more that judgments might be prevented, than that his corruptions might be mortified, and his heart, by Divine grace, made right in the sight of God.

From this infamous attempt of Simon, all methods of turning the concerns of religion into matter of gain, have been called simony, of which there are various sorts. Selfish hypocrites judge of others by themselves, and covetous men deem money a consideration for sacred offices.

Grant us, Lord, another sort of faith than that which made Simon wonder only, and did not sanctify his heart, but consisted with unworthy notions of the gift of the Holy Ghost. May we abhor all thoughts of making religion subserve the purposes of pride or ambition. And keep us from that subtle poison of spiritual pride which seeks glory to itself even from humility. May we seek only the honour which cometh from God. Let our hearts be right in thy sight.—(83.)

The apostles returned to Jerusalem

when they had finished the business they came about. In their journey they preached in many villages of the Samaritans. John formerly desired to call for fire from heaven to consume some of that nation, but his Lord now had taught him another lesson. The ministers of Christ must preach the word of God in cities or in villages, as they have opportunity, and leave the event with God.

Ver. 26--40. *Philip and the Ethiopian.*

Philip was directed to go to a desert. Sometimes God opens a door of opportunity to his ministers in very unlikely places.

God never sends any man on his messages without giving such directions as shall prevent all mistakes and miscarriages, if simply and implicitly followed. This is also strictly true of the doctrines contained in his word; no soul ever missed salvation that simply followed the directions given in the word of God.—(11.)

Just when Philip reached the spot, a chariot passed, and showed for what end he had been sent thither. In this sat an Ethiopian, an eunuch, or chief officer of that country, who appears to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion. He had taken a long journey to worship at Jerusalem, and, on his return, was reading the scriptures aloud. In consequence of an immediate suggestion from the Holy Spirit, Philip inquired whether he understood what he read. We should study to do good to those we come into company with by travelling: thus the lips of the righteous may feed many. We should not be so shy of all strangers as some affect to be. As to those of whom we know nothing else, we know this, that they have souls. It is wisdom for men of business to redeem time for holy duties; to fill up every minute with something which will turn to a good account. When returning from public worship, we should use means for keeping up the good affections there kindled, and preserving the good impressions there made. The Ethiopian, sensible of his disadvantages, desired to receive instruction, though from a poor stranger. God knows whom he hath chosen; and incidents, however they may appear casual, form part of his plan to bring them to the knowledge of salvation. Nothing can be deemed little or unimportant, for we know not the effects of it.

In reading the word of God, we should often pause, to inquire of whom and of

what the sacred writers spake; but especially should our thoughts be employed about the meek, patient, and suffering Redeemer, who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before the shearer. He is now exalted at the right hand of the Father; his generation as the Son of God is abundantly declared, and all judgment is vested in him.

These verses which the eunuch read, foretold of the Messiah,

1. That he should die; should be led to the slaughter, as sheep offered in sacrifice. With what little reason then was the death of Christ a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews, when it was plainly foretold by their own prophets! 2. That he should die wrongfully; should die by violence; for he must be cut off, but not for himself. 3. That he should die patiently; never was there such an example of patience as our Lord Jesus. 4. That yet he should live for ever, to ages which cannot be numbered.

It is a material question the eunuch asks, and a very sensible one; "Does the prophet speak this of himself, or of some other man?" Though the modern Jews will not allow it to be spoken of the Messiah, yet their ancient doctors so interpreted it.

The eunuch's main difficulty was concerning the person of whom the prophet spoke. This gave Philip an opportunity to preach the gospel, and to show the exact fulfilment of the prophecy in the Lord Jesus. The Ethiopian was convinced, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, of the exact and extraordinary accomplishment of the scripture, was made to understand the nature of the Messiah's kingdom and salvation, and desired to be numbered among the disciples of Christ. Those who seek the truth, and employ their time in searching the scriptures, will be sure to reap advantages.

The avowal of the Ethiopian must be understood as comprehending, 1. A simple reliance on Christ. True faith brings us to Christ for salvation; causes us to renounce every other hope; and engages us to rely on Him as our All in all. 2. An unreserved devotion to Him. If we believe in Christ as having redeemed us by his blood, we must also of necessity surrender up ourselves to him as his peculiar people. Let us then ask ourselves, Can I, in the same way, declare, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"



Let us not be satisfied till we acquire faith, as the eunuch did, by diligent study of the holy scriptures, and the teaching of the Spirit of God; let us not be satisfied till we get it fixed, as an influential principle in our hearts.—(61.)

He must believe with all his heart; with the heart man believeth, not with the head only, by assent to gospel-truths, in the understanding; but with the heart, by consent of the will to gospel terms.

Philip had shown the nature of baptism, as the initiatory ordinance of Christianity; and when they came to some water, the ethiopian desired to be baptized; and confessing his full persuasion that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, he was admitted to that ordinance. Men form their conjectures concerning the mode in which Philip baptized the ethiopian, according to their different sentiments on that subject.

As soon as the eunuch was baptized, the Spirit of God conveyed Philip from him, it would appear, in a miraculous manner, so that he saw him no more; but this tended to confirm his faith. He proceeded homeward rejoicing, not in his outward baptism, for in that Simon Magus might have rejoiced, but in Christ and in his glorious salvation. Philip, being conveyed to Azotus, preached in the cities on the sea-coast, till he came to Cesarea. For aught that appears, he had his principal residence there ever after; for in Cesarea we find him in a house of his own, ch. 21. 8.

When the inquirer after salvation becomes acquainted with Jesus and his gospel, he will go his way rejoicing, and will fill up his station in society from other motives and in another manner than heretofore. The communion of saints on earth, though pleasing, commonly is transient. Different employments and services call them to different places, but under the influence of the same Spirit, they will all serve their generation; and then they will meet before the throne, to part no more, but to join in unceasing praises to their Lord and Saviour.

O thou, the good Shepherd, how gracious and condescending art thou to seek wandering, lost souls! The dispositions of thy providence as to the time and place of conversion, are often very remarkable. Blessed be thy name for following us with thy gospel. May we desire with all our hearts to receive Thee as offered to us therein. Whatever is in our hearts

contrary to thy kingdom, may we earnestly seek to have it destroyed. May we believe in Thee as the only begotten Son of God, and the only Saviour of sinners. If any thing else be implied in believing in Thee "with all the heart," we beseech thee to work it in us by thy blessed Spirit. Though baptized in thy name with water, it is not enough without the baptism of the Holy Ghost. O grant this to every one of us; then shall we go on our way rejoicing.—(83.)

27. Candace reigned upon the Nile, in Atbara, near Egypt. Her capital was taken by the Romans a few years before the conversion of her treasurer. The conversion of the Abyssinians does not appear to have taken place till three hundred years later.—See Bruce.

## CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1—9. *The conversion of Saul.*

Saul was born in Tarsus, a free city of the Romans. His father and mother were Jews, of the tribe of Benjamin. His education was first at Tarsus; there he acquainted himself with the philosophy and learning of the Greeks. Thence he was sent to Jerusalem; his tutor was Gamaliel, an eminent pharisee; he improved very much in learning; he had likewise a trade, which was common with Jews that were bred scholars.

Such was the young man on whom the grace of God wrought the mighty change here recorded. He was a man of good morals in many respects, but a blasphemer of Christ, a persecutor of christians, and injurious to both, 1 Tim. 1. 13. And so ill informed was his conscience, that he thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Christ, and that he did God service in it.

His breathing out threatenings and slaughter intimates that it was his constant business; he even breathed in this as in his element. Hearing that the christians in Damascus were quiet, he resolved to give them disturbance; and applied for a commission to persecute the christians there. The high-priest and sanhedrim claimed a power over the Jews in all countries, and had deference paid to their authority in matters of religion, by all their synagogues. Thus was Saul employed when the grace of God wrought that great change in him. Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin. The conversion

of Paul is one of the wonders of the christian church.

When Saul drew near to Damascus, suddenly there shone around him a splendour brighter than the noonday sun, and falling to the ground with terror and amazement, he heard the voice of one demanding why he persecuted Him. Thus was he warned that he was not attempting to reduce a company of ignorant deluded men, nor thereby doing God service, but persecuting the Lord of glory, who considered the cause of the disciples as his own. Inquiring who the glorious Lord was that thus appeared and spake to him, it was answered, He was Jesus the Nazarene, whom Saul had often derided and blasphemed, and now persecuted in his disciples; and was warned that he could only injure himself by contending with One who possessed all power in heaven and earth.

It is to be valued as a signal token of Divine favour, if God, either by the inward operations of his grace, or the outward occurrences of his providence, prevent us from prosecuting and executing sinful purposes, 1 Sam. 25. 32. Here it is only said, that there shined round about him a light from heaven; but it appears by ver. 17, that the Lord Jesus was in this light. He saw that Just One, ch. 22. 14; and ch. 26. 13.

How short is the transition between this and the unseen world! It is but for God to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view, compared to which, whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Every moment we stand upon the confines of an eternal state, and without dissolving the connexion between soul and body, God can open a passage into the heaven of heavens. Why should we doubt of believers being admitted into the more immediate presence of Christ at death, when we consider what Saul was permitted to see and hear before he was finally removed from this world?—(38.)

Saul was exceedingly terrified and astonished; his guilt was undeniable, his pleas were all silenced, and the influence of the Holy Spirit enlightening, convincing, and humbling his heart, he submitted unreservedly, desiring to know what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Christ's manifestations of himself to poor souls are humbling; they lay them very low, in mean thoughts of themselves,

and humble submission to the will of God. His attendants had fallen to the ground also; they had heard a voice, though they understood not what was said, nor saw any one, but it is probable that Saul saw Jesus in human form, as Stephen had done, 1 Cor. 15. 8; and we find from his own account, ch. 22 and 26, that more passed than is here recorded. When Saul arose from the earth, though his eyes were open, the splendour had blinded him. This proved the whole to be a reality. He was then led to Damascus, which city he entered with very different feelings from those with which he had begun his journey. His mind was so occupied that for three days he took no sustenance, and it pleased God to leave him for that time without relief. His sins were now set in order before him; he was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and so wounded in spirit for sin, that he could relish neither meat nor drink.

The manifested light and glory of the Divine justice, holiness, and power, would at once sink the stoutest sinner to despair, if it were not accompanied with some indications of mercy and grace. When a sinner is brought to a proper sense of his own state and conduct, he will submit without reserve, casting himself wholly on the mercy of the Saviour, and inquiring what he would have him to do. The language of his heart will be, What must I do to be saved? In what way must I come? What method shall I take to be assured that I am reconciled? These and such like questions the believer will daily propose to the Lord, in faith and prayer, desiring to be taught, and enabled to do His will. God will direct the humbled sinner, and though he does not generally bring transgressors to joy and peace in believing, without sorrows and distress of conscience, under which the soul is deeply engaged as to eternal things, yet happy are those who sow in tears, they shall reap in joy.

4. The word translated "hear," also signifies "understand," in which sense it appears to be used in this place.

Ver. 10-22. *Saul converted—preaches Christ.*

A good work was begun in Saul when he was brought to Christ's feet in that word, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And never did Christ leave any who were brought to that.

Ananias, a devout Jew, now a follower of Christ, was ordered to go to Saul, to

heal and to help him of whom it was said, He prayeth. Behold the proud pharisee, the unmerciful oppressor, the daring blasphemer prayeth! And thus it is even now, and with the prouder infidel, or the licentious profligate. What happy tidings are these to all who understand the nature and power of prayer, of such prayer as the humbled sinner presents for the blessings of free salvation! But was it strange for Saul to pray? Was he not a pharisee? Yes; but, now he began to pray after another manner than he had done; then he said his prayers, now he prayed them. Regenerating grace evermore sets people on praying; you may as well find a living man without breath as a living christian without prayer; if breathless, lifeless; and so if prayerless, graceless. The vision Saul had, may be considered as an immediate answer to his prayer, and to make Ananias' coming more welcome to him. God now, in his providence, without visions, brings a messenger to the afflicted soul; an interpreter must be acknowledged with thankfulness to His praise, Job 33, 23. Yet even eminent disciples, like Ananias, sometimes stagger at the commands of their Lord. Though they allow the infinite sufficiency of his mercy and grace, they are apt to limit it according to their prejudices. But it is the Lord's glory to surpass our scanty expectations, and show that those are vessels of his mercy whom we are apt to consider as objects of his vengeance. This was the case with Saul, and the same takes place continually.

He was a vessel in which the gospel-treasure should be lodged, in order to convey it to many; an earthen vessel, 2 Cor. 4, 7, but a chosen vessel. The vessel God uses, he himself chooses; and it is fit he should himself choose the instruments he employs, John 15, 16. Saul is designed for eminent services and for eminent sufferings.

Ananias, assured of this, obeyed Christ without further hesitation. He called the persecutor, Brother Saul, and declared that he was to be miraculously restored to sight, and then made partaker of the Holy Ghost. There fell from his eyes as it were scales, which had occasioned his blindness. This had been an emblem of the benighted state of his soul, as the recovery of his sight, by the power and mercy of Christ, was of his spiritual enlightening. When this token of reconcili-

ation had been granted, Saul arose, and, by receiving christian baptism, professed himself a disciple of Christ. Having obtained hope and peace he took proper refreshment, and found his strength restored.

Doubtless, it was viewed by many as a great confirmation of the truth of christianity, that such a notorious persecutor of it, came, on a sudden, to be an intelligent and strenuous preacher of it. This miracle on the mind of such a man, outshone the miracles on men's bodies; giving such a man another heart, was more than giving men to speak with other tongues.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit removes the scales of ignorance and pride from the understanding; then the sinner becomes a new creature, and endeavours to recommend the anointed Saviour, the Son of God to his former associates. Thus Saul, continuing with the brethren at Damascus, instead of delivering his letters to the synagogues, preached to the Jews concerning Jesus, showing that he was the Messiah. He states, Gal. 1, 11, 12, that he received his knowledge of the gospel immediately by revelation from Jesus Christ.

He preached that Christ was the Son of God; by this is not meant merely that he was the Messiah or Christ, for then his preaching would have been that Christ was Christ; but that Jesus who was Christ, was truly in his nature the Son of God—that Son of God which He affirmed himself to be, continually, through his ministry, although the Jews accused him that he thereby made himself equal with God.—(94.)

And we have reason to think that Saul was instrumental in converting many to the faith of Christ, and in building up the church at Damascus, which he came thither to destroy.

14. *J. P. Smith* shows that the expression here used "that call on thy name," denotes address, entreaty, or invocation.

22. From the epistle to the Galatians, it appears, that shortly after his conversion Saul went into Arabia, and during his residence there he was fully instructed, as we may conclude, by special revelation, and by the diligent study of the Old Testament scriptures, in the doctrines and duties of the gospel. Three years after his conversion he returned to Damascus, and boldly preached the gospel, when the Jews conspired to kill him, on which he escaped to Jerusalem and visited the apostles there, as is related in the latter part of this chapter.—*T. H. Horne*. For some further remarks on St. Paul's conversion see note ch. 26, 11.

Ver. 23—31. *Saul is persecuted at Damascus, and goes to Jerusalem.*

The Jews took counsel to kill Saul, for his being a christian was a testimony against them. The disciples in the night, the gates being watched, let him down by the wall, in a basket, as he himself relates 2 Cor. 11. 33, so he escaped out of their hands. This shows us, 1. That when we enter into the way of God we must look for temptation, and prepare accordingly; and that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may not be deterred or driven by it from the way of God. 2. That many who witness such changes are amazed, but few effectually convinced. Though Saul's conversion was and is a proof of the truth of christianity, yet it could not, of itself, effect the conversion of one soul at enmity with the truth; for nothing can produce true faith, but that power which new creates the heart.

When Saul came to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples. Wherever he came, he owned himself one of that despised, persecuted people, and associated with them; they were now in his eyes the excellent ones of the earth, in whom was all his delight; he desired to be admitted into communion with them; but they believed not that he was a disciple, but that he only pretended to be so. They knew what a bitter persecutor he had been. Believers are apt to be too suspicious of those against whom they imbibe prejudices. The world indeed is full of deceit, and it is necessary to be cautious, but without going to extremes.

Barnabas, who by some means had received fuller information concerning Paul, brought him to Peter and James, Gal. 1. 18, 19, and having satisfied them as to his conversion, he was admitted to communion with the disciples, and preached in the name of Christ. He also disputed with the Grecians, whom he had formerly joined against Stephen. They were so enraged that they purposed to kill him, on which he retired to Tarsus, his native city. The Lord will clear up the characters of true believers. He will bring them acquainted with his people, and often gives them opportunities of bearing testimony to his truth, before those who once witnessed their enmity to it.

It was also by direction from Heaven that Saul left Jerusalem at this time, as he

himself related, ch. 22. 17, 18. Christ now appeared to him, and ordered him to go quickly out of Jerusalem, for he must be sent to the Gentiles, ch. 22. 21. Those by whom God has work to do, shall be protected from their enemies, till it is done. Christ's witnesses cannot be slain till they have finished their testimony.

As this active persecutor was become a christian, and removed from the reach of his enemies, the persons concerned appeared to have been disheartened; and, other causes uniting, the persecutions were stayed, and the churches left at peace. They improved the opportunity to edify one another in knowledge and faith; the professors of the gospel walked uprightly, and enjoyed much comfort from the Holy Ghost, in the hope and peace of the gospel; others were won over to them, and their numbers were continually increased. They had recourse to the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and lived upon that, not only in days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. The comforts of the earth, when they had the most free and full enjoyment of them, could not content them without the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Observe the connexion of these two; when they walked in the fear of the Lord, then they walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully, who walk circumspectly.

When believers walk conscientiously in the fear of the Lord and the comforts of the gospel, they are manifestly an excellent and happy people. Let us watch against being cast down and dejected by troubles, which tend to prejudice the minds of unbelievers, and to render them afraid of the truth.

31. *Lardner* considers that the political circumstances of the Jewish nation at that time explain the cause of this rest. The emperor Caligula had ordered his statue to be erected in the temple at Jerusalem, and a Roman army was marched from Syria to enforce it. The Jews, filled with consternation, met the Roman general in vast multitudes, and prevailed upon him to desist. The trouble excited among the Jews by this decree, diverted their attention from persecuting the christians.

Ver. 32—35. *The cure of Eneas.*

Peter visited the churches planted by the dispersed preachers. As an apostle he came to the saints at Lydda. Christians are called saints; not only eminent ones, as saint Peter and saint Paul, but every sincere professor of the faith of Christ.

Peter wrought a cure on Eneas, a man bed-ridden eight years. He was sick of the palsy, and we may suppose that he and all about him despaired of relief, and concluded he must still keep his bed till removed to his grave. Christ chose patients whose diseases were incurable in a course of nature, to show how desperate was the case of fallen mankind, when he undertook their cure. When we were wholly without strength, as this poor man, he sent his word to heal us. . .

Peter interested Christ in his case; "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." Peter does not pretend to do it by any power of his own, but directs him to look up to Christ for help, and assures him of an immediate cure. He ordered him to exert himself, Arise, and make thy bed, that all may see thou art thoroughly cured. Let none say, that because it is Christ, who, by the power of his grace, works all our works in us, therefore we have no work, no duty to do; for though Jesus Christ makes thee whole, yet thou must arise, and use the power he gives thee.

Many people in the town of Lydda and in the country of Saron made inquiry into the truth of the miracle, saw that it was a miraculous cure wrought by the power of Christ, in his name, and with a design to confirm and ratify the doctrine of Christ. They submitted to the convincing proof and evidence this was of the Divine original of the christian doctrine, and turned to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus, to be ruled, taught, and saved by him. They believed him to be the Lord, the Messiah, and became his disciples.

Ver. 36—43. *Dorcas raised to life.*

Here we have a greater miracle wrought by Peter—the raising of Tabitha to life, when she had been for some time dead. She was a disciple, eminent above many for works of charity; she showed her faith by her works. Many are full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works; but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker. She is praised, not only for the alms which she gave, but for the alms-deeds which she did. Those that have not property to give in charity, may yet be able to do in charity, working with their hands, or walking with their feet, for the benefit of the poor.

She was removed in the midst of her usefulness. It is not promised to those who consider the poor that they shall never

be sick, but that the Lord will strengthen them upon the bed of languishing, at least with strength in their soul, and so will make their bed easy in their sickness, see Ps. 41. 1, 3.

Her death was a public loss, and it appears that having heard of Peter's miracle at Lydda, they sent for him, hoping he might restore her to life again. Peter arose, and went with them. Let not faithful ministers grudge to be at every body's call, as far as they have ability, when the great apostle made himself the servant of all, 1 Cor. 9. 19. He found the corpse laid in the upper chamber, attended by poor widows. Their commendation of Tabitha was, like her own virtues, not in word, but in deed. Those are certainly best praised whose own works praise them, whether the words of others do so or not.

Observe what a grateful sense the poor had of her kindness. Those are ungrateful indeed, who have kindness shown them, and will not at least acknowledge it, by showing the kindness that is done them. When the poor reflect upon the rich as uncharitable and unmerciful, they ought to reflect upon themselves, and consider whether they are not unthankful and ungrateful. Their showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, tended to the praise, not only of her charity, but of her industry. See Prov. 31. 19—22.

The widows stood by Peter, weeping. When the merciful are taken away, it should be laid to heart, especially by those to whom they have been in a particular manner merciful. They needed not to weep for her; but they weep for themselves and for their children, who will soon find the want of her. While we live upon the fulness of Christ for our whole salvation, we should desire to be full of good works, for the honour of his name and for the benefit of his saints.

Such characters as Dorcas are useful where they dwell, even as able faithful preachers, showing the excellency of the word of truth by their lives. How mean then the anxiety of the numerous females who seek no distinction but outward decoration! who waste their lives in trifling pursuits of vanity, while works of charity and labours of love would have rendered them, at much less expense, a blessing to numbers, and an ornament to the christian faith! When such triflers die, their loss is little felt or lamented, while such as had far less in their power, but who

have sought to relieve the poor and needy, will be truly lamented.

Peter put all forth, that he might with more freedom pour out his soul before God in prayer upon this occasion. In his healing Eneas there was an implied prayer, but in this greater work he addressed himself to God, by solemn prayer, as Christ when he raised Lazarus: but with the submission of a servant, who is under direction, he kneeled down and prayed. When he had prayed he turned to the body, and spake in his Master's name, and according to his example, "Tabitha, arise; return to life again." Power went along with his word, and she came to life, opened her eyes which death had closed. Thus in the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, the first sign of life is the opening of the eyes of the mind. When she saw Peter she sat up, and he gave her his hand and lifted her up. He then called the saints and widows who were in sorrow for her death, and presented her alive to them, to their great comfort.

Many were by this miracle convinced of the truth of the gospel, that it was from heaven, and not of men, and believed in the Lord. Joppa, being a town of seafaring men, notice of it would be soon carried from thence to other countries.

Finding there was an opening for good, Peter tarried there many days: he tarried not in the house of Tabitha; he would not seem to seek his own glory, or to receive a recompense for his miraculous powers.

Here we see that the Lord can make up every loss; that he overrules every event for the good of those who trust in him, and for the glory of his name; also, that piety, diligence, and indifference to outward accommodations, should mark the whole conduct of those who preach the gospel of God our Saviour.

43. The trade of a tanner was exceedingly despised among the Jews. Apparently this circumstance is related to show, that the apostle did not hesitate to take up his lodgings with the humblest and most despised of his countrymen.

A. Clarke says this chapter will ever remain an impregnable fortress to defend christianity, and to defeat its enemies.

## CHAPTER X.

Ver 1-8. *Cornelius directed to send for Peter.*

Hitherto none had been baptized into the christian church but Jews, Samaritans, and proselytes, who were all circumcised and observed the ceremonial law; but now

the Gentiles were to be called to partake all the privileges of God's people, without being proselyted to Judaism.

Cornelius, whom God was pleased to select as the first fruits of the Gentiles, was the commander of a hundred Roman soldiers; he had become acquainted with the true God, and had been led to renounce idolatry. He was charitable to the Jews, and constant in prayer. Pure and undefiled religion is sometimes found where we least expect it, and many have been brought to acquaintance with God by means of the tendency of which they knew not. Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, neither will excuse from the other. Doubtless he had true faith in God's word, as far as he understood it, though not as yet explicit faith in Christ. This was the fruit of the regenerating Spirit of God, given to him through the mediation of Jesus, even before he knew him, as is the case with us all when we, who before were dead in sin, are quickened. Through Christ also his prayers and alms were accepted, which otherwise would have been rejected. Nothing spiritually good, or acceptable to God, can be produced from the heart of a fallen creature, except by the regenerating Spirit of Christ—where that is communicated, all things necessary to salvation will follow; but when, or how, cannot be previously ascertained by man; and it must be remembered, that many things morally good, and many specious appearances of religion, are wholly distinct from spirituality.

Cornelius, under the influence of Divine grace, appears to have been waiting for further discoveries of the will of God. He was engaged in solemn prayer, at the hour of evening sacrifice, when he saw an angel, who spoke to him by name, and assured him that his alms and prayers were come up before God with acceptance, as a memorial before Him, not to merit his favour, but to plead with Him to fulfil his gracious promises. The angel then told him to send for Peter, who would show him the way of truth and salvation, about which he so earnestly inquired; and Cornelius did so. Implicit obedience tends to increasing light and comfort; and pious servants are a blessing, which masters should seek to obtain.

Without dispute or delay Cornelius was obedient to the heavenly vision. In any

affair wherein our souls are concerned, it is good for us not to lose time.

1. See note ch. 11. 19.—An inscription yet in existence mentions the Italian cohort or band, belonging to the tenth legion, which the Roman historians state was at that time stationed in Judea.

Ver. 9—18. *Peter's vision.*

The prejudices of Peter against the Gentiles would have prevented his going to Cornelius, unless the Lord had prepared him for this service. While, therefore, he had retired for prayer, he fell into an ecstasy, in which, while his senses were closed to outward objects, others were presented to his mind. He was at the time more hungry than usual, which was, as it were, a preparation for the vision that followed. There appeared to him a vessel, resembling a great sheet or wrapper, which seemed to come from heaven to the earth, tied up at the four corners, and containing all sorts of living creatures, clean and unclean. He was then directed to kill and eat whatever he chose. To this he objected his strict observance of the ceremonial law, but was told not to call that common or polluted which God had cleansed.

The law concerning the distinction of meats and animals, had been an emblem of the distinction between the Jews and other nations, as well as a means of keeping up the separation. To inform a Jew that God had cleansed those animals which were hitherto deemed unclean, was in effect announcing the abrogation of the law of Moses, and the beginning of an enlarged dispensation.

This great vessel might signify the christian church, and it reminds us what a varied company are collected into the church of God, and secured by the covenant of grace, as this vessel was knit together. Some were fierce as beasts of prey, others drudges to the world, others sensual grovelling reptiles; some soaring aloft in wild speculations. But, although by nature thus different, by sanctifying grace they are corrected, regulated, and qualified to serve in the common cause of the gospel of Christ.

The voice repeatedly addressing Peter, evidently meant that he was thenceforth to associate with converts to Christ among the Gentiles, and to make no distinction between them and Jewish disciples.

Though Peter had no reason to doubt that it was a heavenly vision, yet he doubted concerning the meaning of it; but he was soon made to know, for the

men sent from Cornelius came to the house, and by their errand it appeared what was the meaning of this vision. God knows what services are before us, and how to prepare us; and we know the meaning of what he has taught us, when we find what occasion we have to make use of it. How great must the prejudice have been when strong Divine admonitions were requisite to induce an apostle to attend to a man of so fair a character and good report; who, by direction through an angel, had sent for him to receive instruction!

13. Or, "Sacrifice and eat." *A. Clarke* considers that meaning may well be preserved here. Animals offered in sacrifice were considered as given to God; and when He had received the life, the flesh was given to the offerer, to feed upon it. He thus paraphrases the words, "Rise up; already a blessed sacrifice is prepared; go and offer it to God, and let thy soul feed on the fruits of his mercy and goodness;" thus showing his gracious design of saving both Jews and Gentiles by Christ crucified.

15. What God hath declared clean.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 19—33. *Peter goes to Cornelius.*

Peter was directed by the Spirit to go with Cornelius' messengers, and this explained the vision. He was at a loss about it, and then had it explained: this encourages us to look to God for direction when we know not what to do.

He is ordered by the Spirit to go with the messengers to Cornelius, though he was a Gentile, cheerfully, without hesitation, not doubting, for it was his duty. When we see our call clear to any service, we should not suffer ourselves to be perplexed with doubts and scruples arising from prejudices or prepossessions.

Peter lodged the messengers, though they were Gentiles, to show how readily he complied with the design of the vision. He went with them to Cornelius, accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa, where he now was. Probably Peter desired that they might witness his proceedings with reference to the Gentiles.

Cornelius had called together his friends to partake with him of the heavenly instructions he expected from Peter. We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone. It ought to be both given and taken as kindness and respect to our kindred and friends, to invite them to join us in religious exercises.

Peter had been made known to Cornelius in so extraordinary a manner, that the latter thought the apostle worthy of extraordinary honours, and rendered him

homage, which Peter deemed improper to be received by any mere man like himself. He told them that they knew it to be contrary to the Jewish law to associate with those of another nation, but God had shown him that this distinction was not to be adhered to. He had therefore come without objecting, and now desired to be particularly informed why he had been sent for. He thought it necessary to let them know that he came by Divine revelation. Cornelius declared the direction God gave him to send for Peter, and that it was in obedience to those directions he had sent for him. We are right in our aims in attending a gospel-ministry, when we do it with regard to the Divine appointment instituting that ordinance, and requiring us to make use of it.

He then repeated his vision, expressed his satisfaction that Peter had come so readily, assured him that they were all assembled as in the immediate presence of God, and prepared to give a full assent and sincere welcome to the Divine message Peter was about to deliver. Alas! it is seldom that ministers are called to speak to such companies, however small, in which it may be said that they are all present in the sight of God, to hear all things that are commanded of God.

Observe, Peter was to preach all things that were commanded him of God. They were ready to hear what he was commanded of God to say. We are desirous to hear all that thou art commissioned to preach, though if be ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, and ever so contrary to our former notions or present secular interests. We are ready to hear all, and therefore let nothing be kept back that is profitable for us.

Ver. 34—43. *Peter's discourse to Cornelius.*

Here is the substance of Peter's discourse to these Gentiles. He began by allowing that he had been prejudiced in favour of the Jews, and against the Gentiles, but that he was now assured God was no respecter of persons.

Observe, to respect persons is entirely different from discriminating characters, or conferring unmerited favours on one and not on another. The Jews had carried their ideas of God's special favour to their nation, so as to imply that a wicked Jew would be favoured on account of his relation to Abraham; and a pious, believing, sincere worshipper of other nations

rejected because he was a Gentile. Peter now clearly saw the error of such an idea, or any views which led to such consequences. Acceptance cannot be obtained on any other ground than that of the covenant of mercy, through the atonement of Christ; but wherever true religion is found, God will accept it without regarding names or sects. The fear of God, and works of righteousness, are the substance of true religion, the effects of special grace; they are evidence, though not the meritorious cause of a man's acceptance; and whatever may be wanting in knowledge or faith, will in due time be communicated from Him who hath begun it.

The apostle next proceeded to state his message. This would not have been necessary if Cornelius had been accepted for his own good works, or if every man might be saved by his own religion, provided he is sincere in it.

Because they were Gentiles, inhabiting the land of Israel, Peter refers to what they could not but know concerning our Lord Jesus. 1. They knew in general the word, that is, the gospel, which God sent to the children of Israel. We are often told in the gospels, how the fame of Christ went into all parts of Canaan, when he was on earth. The purport of this word was, that God by it published the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. He lets the world of mankind know that he is willing to be at peace with them through Jesus Christ; in him he was reconciling the world to himself. It was sent to the children of Israel, in the first place. 2. They knew the several matters of fact relating to the gospel. They knew the baptism of repentance which John preached. They knew that immediately after the coming of Christ, that word of peace was published throughout all Judea, and that it took rise from Galilee. They knew that Jesus of Nazareth, when here upon earth, went about doing good, both to the souls and the bodies of men; he went from place to place, and wherever he came was doing good. And in this he has set us an example of industry in serving God and our generation. They knew that the Jews put him to death. All this they knew, but Peter, for himself, and the rest of the apostles, attests it. 3. They might know by this, that he had a commission from God to preach and act as he did. Let them know that this Jesus



Christ, by whom peace is made between God and man, is Lord of all; not only as God over all, blessed for evermore, but as Mediator. All power, both in heaven and in earth, is put into his hand, and all judgment committed to him. He was authorized and enabled, by Divine anointing, to do what he did; whence he was called Christ—the Messiah—the Anointed One. The Holy Ghost descended upon him at his baptism, and he was full of power, both in preaching and working miracles. His works were wrought in God. God not only sent him, but was present with him, and carried him on, in all his services and sufferings. Those whom God anoints he will accompany; he will be with those to whom he has given his Spirit.

Peter then declares Christ's resurrection from the dead, and the proofs of it. He insists upon this as the main support of that word which preaches peace by Jesus Christ. 1. Him God raised up the third day; which not only disproved all the calumnies Christ was laid under by men, but effectually proved God's acceptance of the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, by the blood of his cross. 2. The proofs of his resurrection were incontestably clear; for God gave him to be made manifest—to be visible, evidently so; the resurrection of Christ was proved before sufficient witnesses. They were chosen before of God to be witnesses of it. They had not a sudden and transient view, but much converse with him. They saw him so frequently, and he conversed with them so familiarly, that they ate and drank with him.

Peter concludes with an inference from all this, that they all ought to believe in this Jesus. Observe,

1. Why they are to believe in him; faith has reference to a testimony, and the christian faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; it is built upon the testimony given by them. God gave the apostles in charge to preach to the people, and to testify concerning Christ; so that their testimony is God's testimony; and they are his witnesses to the world. The prophets of the Old Testament, who testified beforehand, not only concerning his sufferings, but concerning the design and intention of them; very much corroborated the apostle's testimony concerning them.

2. What they must believe concerning

him. That we are all accountable to Christ as our Judge; so that it is the great concern of every one to seek his favour, and to have him as our Friend. And if we believe in him, we shall all be justified by him as our Righteousness. The prophets, when they spake of the death of Christ, witnessed, that through his name, for his sake, whosoever believeth in him, Jew or Gentile, shall receive remission of sins. That is the great thing we need, without which we are undone, and which the convinced conscience is most inquisitive after, which the carnal Jews promised themselves from their ceremonial sacrifices and purifications; yea, and the heathen too from their atonements; but all in vain. It is to be had only through the name of Christ, and only by those that believe in his name; and they that do so may be assured their sins are pardoned, and there shall be no condemnation to them. And the remission of sins lays a foundation for all other favours and blessings, by taking that out of the way which hinders them. If sin be pardoned, all is well, and shall end everlastingly well. The minister of Christ must declare to sinners of every character, the word which God hath sent unto men, preaching peace to them by Jesus, the Prince of peace and Lord of all, by whom alone they can be saved. While we consider the effects of our Redeemer's unction by the Holy Ghost, let us endeavour to copy his example, being unwearied in efforts to do good to others; thus it will appear that God is with us. Receiving the testimony of scripture to the power of his sacrifice, and the free remission of our sins, through faith in his name, let us daily prepare to meet him as the appointed Judge of the living and the dead.

35. *Townsend* observes, Here is nothing to countenance a disregard of christianity, or to inculcate what is called natural religion. Observe, 1. Cornelius was, by a special revelation, required to embrace christianity. 2. The general commission to the apostles to publish the gospel through the whole world. Matt. 28. 3. Peter required Cornelius to be admitted into the christian church. 4. Paul has clearly stated the superior privileges of christianity, in his doctrinal epistles. 5. The world by human wisdom knew not God. Such knowledge was too wonderful for the wisest of the heathen philosophers. 6. The patriarchal and Mosaical dispensations were only schoolmasters to the christian.

36—38. *Schaeffeld* proposes to render these verses more correctly as follows:—36. The word which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all,) ye know. 37. Even the matter which took place

throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached. 38. Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him, &c. In the English version of ver. 36, 37, two different words are rendered by the same term, "word."

Ver. 44—48. *The gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out upon Cornelius and others.*

Here we have God owning Peter's word, by conferring the Holy Ghost upon the hearers of it. While Peter was yet speaking these words, and perhaps designed to say more, the Holy Ghost, even in his miraculous gifts and powers, fell on all those who heard the word, even as on the apostles at first; so Peter says, ch. 11. 15. Thus God bare witness to what he said, and accompanied it with Divine power; by that it appeared he was sent of God. The Holy Ghost fell upon others after they were baptized, for their confirmation; but upon these Gentiles before they were baptized, to show that God does not confine himself to outward signs. The Holy Ghost fell upon those who were neither circumcised nor baptized; for it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.

It appeared that the Holy Ghost was fallen upon them, for they spake with tongues which they never learned. They magnified God, they spake of Christ and the benefits of redemption, concerning which Peter had been preaching to the glory of God. Thus did they on whom the Holy Ghost first descended. Whatever gift we are endued with; we ought to honour God with it, and particularly the gift of speaking.

The believing Jews who were present, were astonished that upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they thought appropriated to their own nation. Had they understood the Old Testament, it would not have so astonished them. By mistaken notions of things, we create difficulties to ourselves respecting the methods of Divine providence and grace.

As they were undeniably baptized with the Holy Ghost, not only by his sanctifying influences, but by his miraculous gifts also, Peter concluded they were not to be refused the baptism of water, and the ordinance was administered.

The argument is conclusive; can we deny the sign to those who have received the things signified? Are not those on whom God has bestowed the grace of the covenant, plainly entitled to the seals

of the covenant? Surely, those who have received the Spirit as well as we, ought to receive baptism as well as we; for it becomes us to follow God's indications; and take those into communion with us, whom he hath taken into communion with himself. Thus was one unusual step of Divine grace taken after another to bring the Gentiles into the church. How well is it for us that the grace of our good God is so much more extensive than the charity even of some good men!

They owned both Peter's word and God's work, in their desire of further advantage by Peter's ministry; they prayed him so tarry certain days, that they might be further instructed by him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Those who have some acquaintance with Christ, cannot but desire more. Even those who have received the Holy Ghost, must see their need of the ministry of the word.

While we seek to mix faith with the word of God, and to yield obedience to it, we may expect to be more fully illuminated, sanctified, and comforted by the gift of the Holy Ghost; that through the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, we may use our tongues to celebrate his praises. This inward baptism of the Spirit is especially to be valued, yet outward ordinances are not to be neglected; and those who have learned and experienced the things of God, will desire the further company and teaching of his ministers, to build them up in their most holy faith.

Surely we sinners of the Gentiles should read this chapter with peculiar gratitude and admiring praise. Thus the partition wall was broken down, the door of mercy was opened to us, that we might become follow-heirs with God's ancient people, in all the blessings of the covenant and of salvation. May the Lord speedily recall the Jews into the church, and bring in the fullness of the Gentiles; that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom established, and his will done, throughout the whole earth, as it is by all the angels in heaven.

## CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1—18. *Peter's vindication.*

The conduct of the Jewish Christians, upon hearing of Peter's intercourse with the Gentiles, shows the extent to which

they were prejudiced against other nations, unless they received the law of Moses. It was before Peter returned to Jerusalem, that the apostles and the brethren heard the Gentiles also had received the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ; which is not only a word of God, but the word of God; for it is the summary of all Divine revelation. They received Christ; for his name is called, the Word of God, Rev. 19. 13.

The imperfection of human nature strongly appears when godly persons are offended and grieved at things which should excite their especial joy and gratitude. Sometimes they are displeased even to hear that the word of God has been received, because the peculiarities of their own system have not been attended to. They are even ready to find fault with God's plan of bringing sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, and with those that execute it, if their own plans have been broken. And we are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when tried, prove very tractable.

It is the bane and damage of the church, to exclude those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, who are not in every thing as we are. But if we have proved our own work, we may rejoice in ourselves, whatever are the reflections of our brethren. Those who are zealous and courageous in the service of Christ, must expect to be censured by those who, under pretence of being cautious, are cold and indifferent.

Peter, with candour and frankness, stated the whole affair, as it has been already related. We should at all times meekly bear with the infirmities of our brethren; and instead of taking offence, or answering with warmth, we should candidly explain our motives, and show the nature of our proceedings.

He was as averse to the thoughts of conversing with Gentiles, or eating with them, as they could be. But he was told that God had cleansed those persons and things which were before polluted; and therefore he must no longer call them common, nor look upon them as unfit to be meddled with by the peculiar people.

Here is something further of what the angel said to Cornelius; before, it was, Send for Peter, and he shall speak to thee, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do; but here it is, He shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall

be saved. The words of the gospel are words whereby we may be eternally saved; not merely by hearing them and reading them, but by believing and obeying them. They open the way of salvation to us, and if we follow the method prescribed, we shall certainly be happy for ever. Those who embrace the gospel of Christ, will have salvation brought by it to their families.

The descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentile hearers, completed the evidence, that it was the will of God he should take the Gentiles into communion. The fact was plain and undeniable; thus God attested what was done, and declared his approbation of it. That preaching is certainly right, with which the Holy Ghost is given.

It behoves every one to remember who and what he is. While men are very zealous for their own regulations, they should take care that they do not withstand God, or prescribe other terms of admission to their communion than he has appointed for admission into his church; lest they reject and grieve those who have believed in Christ, and have received the gift of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, even as they.

The prejudices which had so long blinded the eyes of the apostles were now removed, and a new principle of love sprung up in their hearts; so that they could welcome the accession of the Gentiles to their community, and the participation of the whole heathen world in the privileges which they themselves had so long exclusively enjoyed.—(61.)

They admired and adored the grace of God, which had given repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus, to some among the Gentiles. Candid persons will be satisfied with a proper explanation; and those who love the Lord will glorify him, when certified that he has given repentance to life to any fellow-sinners.

Repentance, if it be true, is unto life; it is to spiritual life: all that truly repent of their sins, evidence it by living a new life, a holy, heavenly, and Divine life. Repentance is God's gift; it is not only his free grace that accepts it, but his mighty grace that works it in us; that takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit. It is a great comfort to us, that God hath exalted his Son Jesus, not only to give repentance to

Israel, and the remission of sins, ch. 5. 31, but to the Gentiles also.

2. Peter having been called to account by the members of the church at Jerusalem, and his considering it requisite thus to give them a full explanation of his conduct, refutes those who contend for his supremacy and infallibility.

17. "Unto us also upon our believing."—*Schulefeld.*

Ver. 19—24. *The success of the gospel at Antioch.*

The first preachers of the gospel at Antioch, were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution, at the time of Stephen's death; thus what was intended for the hurt of the church, was made to work for its good. The wrath of man is made to praise God,

They did not flee from their work, though for the time they declined suffering; they pressed forward, finding that the good pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands. Though the further they travelled, the more they exposed themselves, yet they travelled on dreading no perils in carrying on so good a work; but they preached the word to the Jews only, who were dispersed in all those parts. They did not yet understand that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body; but thought they must turn Jews, and so come into the church, or else remain as they were. They particularly applied themselves to the Hellenist Jews, here called the Grecians, who were at Antioch. Many of the preachers were natives of Judea and Jerusalem; some were by birth of Cyprus and Cyrene, but they had been educated in Jerusalem; these being themselves Grecian Jews, had particular concern for those of their own denomination and distinction. To them they preached the Lord Jesus. That was the constant subject of their preaching; what else should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ?—Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified?

Their preaching was accompanied with the Divine power. Many who were not converted saw the miracles; but when the understanding was enlightened by the Spirit, and the will bowed to the gospel of Christ, that was a day of power. The hand of the Lord was with them, to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men, which they could but speak to the outward ear. A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Observe what the change was; They

believed; they were convinced of the truth of the gospel. The effect and evidence of this was, they turned from confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness which is by faith. They turned from a careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual life. They turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him in the Spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith; all who sincerely believe, will turn to the Lord; for whatever we profess or pretend, we do not really believe the gospel, if we do not cordially embrace Christ as offered to us in the gospel.

This church, thus founded, flourished by the ministry of Barnabas and Saul. The apostles heard the good news, that the gospel was received at Antioch, ver. 22. They sent Barnabas to assist and encourage these hopeful beginnings. When he came, and had seen the grace of God, the tokens of God's good-will to the people of Antioch, and the evidences of his good work among them, he was glad. Both in their public worship, in their common conversation, and in their families, he saw the grace of God among them. Where the grace of God is, it will be seen, as the tree is known by its fruits; and where it is seen, it ought to be owned. What we see which is good in any, we must call God's grace in them, and give that grace the glory of it. We must be glad to see the grace of God in others, and the more when we see it where we did not expect. He did what he could to confirm those in the faith, who were converted to the faith. The more he rejoiced in the beginning of the good work, the more earnest he was with them to persevere. Those in whom we have comfort, we should exhort.

When the Lord Jesus is preached in simplicity and according to the scripture, his hand will give it success; and when sinners are thus brought to the Lord, really good men, who are full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, will discern, admire, and rejoice in the grace of God bestowed on them. They will exhort all who possess the gospel, to cleave to the Lord Jesus, with purpose of heart, know-

ing how many efforts Satan will employ to draw them aside from him.

"For he was a good man," a person remarkable for affection, kindness, and real candour, as well as eminent for grace and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and for the exercise of strong faith in the midst of danger and persecution. By this it appeared Barnabas was richly endued with the gifts and graces of the Spirit. The goodness of his natural disposition would not have qualified him for this service, if he had not been full of the Holy Ghost. He was full of the christian faith himself, and therefore desirous to propagate it among others; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of the faith that works by love. He was instrumental in doing good, by bringing in those that were without, as well as by building up those that were within; many were turned to the Lord before, yet more are to be turned.

19. *Townsend* considers that this passage proves that the gospel was preached to the proselytes of the gate, or to such devout Gentiles as *Cornelius*, before it was preached to the idolatrous Gentiles. The proselytes of the gate were obliged to renounce idolatry, and to worship God according to seven articles, called the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which constituted a sort of law of nature. According to *Benson*, the gospel was confined to the Jews and proselytes of righteousness, those who had fully embraced Judaism, till A. D. 41, including from ch. 2. to 10. From that time to A. D. 44, it was also preached to the proselytes of the gate, ch. 10-12. After A. D. 45, it was preached to the idolatrous Gentiles, ch. 13-28.

Ver. 25-30. *The disciples named christians. A famine foretold. Relief sent to Judea.*

Seeing so large a field of usefulness opened, Barnabas went to Tarsus to procure the assistance of Saul, and they laboured together for a year at Antioch. Teaching the people is one part of the work of ministers. They are not only to be the people's mouth to God in prayer and praise, but God's mouth to the people in opening the scriptures, and teaching out of them the good knowledge of the Lord. It is great encouragement to ministers, when they have opportunity of teaching much people. Preaching is not only for the conviction and conversion of those that are without, but for the instruction and edification of those within. A constituted church must have its teachers.

At Antioch the disciples were first called christians. Hitherto they were called disciples, learners, scholars; but from hence

forward they were called christians. Thus the reproachful names their enemies had branded them with, would, perhaps, be disused. Thus they, who before their conversion had been distinguished by the names of Jews and Gentiles, might after their conversion be called by one and the same name; which would prevent their bringing former marks of distinction, and seeds of contention, into the church. They were thus denominated, not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ—anointed. Jesus is the Christ; they are willing all the world should know that this is the truth they will live and die by. They owned their dependence on Christ, and their receivings from him. It also implied that they were partakers of an unction by God the Holy Spirit.

We are this day called by the same name as these ancient disciples; may we be anointed by the same Spirit, and walk in their steps!

The proper import of this name is a follower of Christ; it denotes one who, from mature deliberation and an unbiassed mind, embraces the religion of Christ, receives his doctrine, believes his promises, and makes it his chief habitual care to shape his life by his precepts and example. Hence it is apparent that multitudes assume the name of christian to whom it is in strict propriety utterly inapplicable. But the name without the reality will only augment our guilt and aggravate our doom. While the bare profession of christianity will bestow neither profit nor delight, the possession of it in reality will be replete with both, and will afford the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.—(38.)

A christian is a member of Christ's mystical body, a temple of the Holy Ghost, an adopted child of God, an anointed king and priest unto him, and an heir of everlasting glory. May we seek those honours which belong to all his saints, may we walk worthy of this vocation wherewith we are called; and may all who are named christians be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

Christ is our great example; and no profession or appellation can benefit us unless we are of those who copy closely and carefully after him. For thus saith

the beloved apostle, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk even as He walked."—(50.)

This name is more honourable than the most glorious titles men can bestow. Lord give us to be christians indeed. Pronounce us to be such thyself, and we shall be happy. Make us christians, and may we love all who are such. Grant, Lord, that christians may forget other names and distinctions, and love one another as christians.—(83.)

When our Lord Jesus ascended on high, he gave gifts unto men, not only apostles and evangelists, but prophets, who were enabled by the Spirit to foresee and foretell things to come; which not only served for a confirmation of the truth of christianity, but was also of great use to the church for its conduct. One of these, named Agabus, Acts 21. 10, predicted a scarcity which should take place. The believers at Antioch, then a wealthy city, probably were far richer than those in Judea, and resolved to send them assistance. Barnabas and Saul were intrusted to carry to the elders at Jerusalem these fruits of the faith and love of the Gentile converts.

The famine came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar; it began in the second year of his reign, and continued to the fourth, if not longer; several of the Roman historians mention it, also Josephus. The best provision we can lay up against a dear time, is, to lay up an interest in God's promises, by doing good, and communicating, Luke 12. 33. Many give it for a reason why they should be sparing, that they expect troublous times, but the scriptures give it as a reason why we should be liberal, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth, Eccl. 11. 2. We must judge for ourselves what may be our ability; but we must be careful to judge righteous judgment according to God's word.

True christians will sympathize with brethren under afflictions; the various dispensations of Providence give opportunities of showing their love, by distributing to the necessities of the saints. Thus God will be glorified, harmony among believers promoted; the faith and hope of the poor encouraged, their prayers and praises excited; and fruit be brought forth to the praise and glory of God.

If all mankind were true christians, how cheerfully would they assist one ano-

ther. The whole earth would be like one large family, every member of which would strive to be more dutiful and affectionate than another.—(83.)

26. It is probable that the name of christians was first bestowed on the disciples by the Gentiles, and that they were not disinclined to adopt a distinctive appellation, which did not convey a term of reproach, like those usually given them by the Jews. It was usual among the Greeks to denominate a sect or body of men from the name of its leader. Some writers consider the name was first given by Divine appointment; but the titles which for many years after that period they used among themselves were the titles of faithful, or believers, the disciples, and the brethren. But before the apostolic age had expired, they adopted the name of christian, and gloried in it. The only place in scripture where it is used by themselves is 1 Pet. 4. 16. Agrippa uses it ch. 26. 28. Tacitus mentions it as a name of obloquy.

28. Doddridge considers that the word translated over "all the word," signifies here, as in some other places, "all the land," referring to Judea only, or at most the neighbouring countries. There were several famines in different parts of the Roman empire during the reign of the emperor Claudius. The one here spoken of probably is the same as that mentioned by Josephus, which began the latter end of the fourth year of that emperor, in which Helena, queen of Adiabene, relieved the Jews with corn from Egypt and Cyprus—a proof that the famine was not universal.

30. Lightfoot computes, by the date of Paul's rapture, fourteen years before he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 12. 1, 2, that it was in this journey of his to Jerusalem, with these alms and offerings, that he had his trance in the temple, which he speaks of ch. 22. 17, and in that trance was rapt up into the third heaven; and then it was that Christ told him he would send him from thence unto the Gentiles; which accordingly he did as soon as he came back to Antioch.—Henry.

The original of the word "elders" is "presbyters." The English word priest is a contraction of presbyter. It is taken from the Jewish institution, and signifies rather the prudence and wisdom of age, than old age itself. They were persons who had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit. *Vulpy* adds, "The rulers of the church were at this early date called either presbyters or bishops; which two titles are in the New Testament undoubtedly applied to the same order of men." Also see *Bingham and Doddridge*.

## CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1-5. *The martyrdom of James, and the imprisonment of Peter.*

Herod's stretching forth his hands to vex certain of the church, intimates that his hands had been tied up by the restraints which perhaps his own conscience held him under in this matter; but now he deliberately broke through them. He began with vexing them only, imprisoning them, fining them, and other ways molesting them; but afterward he proceeded to greater instances of cruelty. He killed

James the brother of John with the sword. James was one of those sons of Zebedee, whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Matt. 20. 23. Now the words of Christ were made good in him, and after suffering like his Master, he was raised to Christ's right hand—if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. He was one of the twelve, commissioned to disciple all nations; but though the apostles were appointed to plant the gospel in the world, if they were taken off, God could do his work with others.

Herod imprisoned Peter; the way of persecution, as of other sins, is down-hill; when men are in it, they cannot easily stop. Those who take one bold step in a sinful way, give Satan advantage to tempt them to take another, and provoke God to leave them to themselves, to go from bad to worse. It is therefore our wisdom to take heed of the beginnings of sin. Herod did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. Persecutors, when applauded, are encouraged to go on. Those make themselves an easy prey to Satan, who make it their business to please men.

It was at the feast of the passover, when the Jews' celebrating the memorial of their typical deliverance, should have led them to accept their spiritual deliverance; but they, under pretence of zeal for the law, irritated one another against the christians and christianity, and were then more violent than at other times.

Peter was delivered to sixteen soldiers, to guard him four at a time. Herod probably had put James to death privately; now that he knows the people's minds, he intends to gratify them with the sight of Peter's execution. He would do this after the passover, so it ought to be read.

This blow, though very afflictive to the church, was wisely permitted to illustrate the courage and faithfulness of the apostles. It showed that the miraculous power and high office afforded them no sure exemption from persecution; but that they ventured and acted upon principles of faith and love to Jesus, in common with other believers. Thus James finished his course, and received the crown first of the apostles. But Peter, being designed for further services, was safe; though to an eye of sense, he seemed assuredly now to be marked out for a speedy sacrifice.—(51.)

The time of Peter's imprisonment gave opportunity to the church; not to concert measures for his rescue, but to pour out fervent prayers for the preservation of his useful life. They were very particular in their prayers for him. The death of James aroused them to greater fervency in their prayers for Peter. Though the death and sufferings of Christ's ministers may be made to serve the interest of Christ's kingdom, yet it is the duty and concern of the church, earnestly to pray for their life, liberty, and tranquillity.

We that live in a cold, prayerless generation, can hardly figure to ourselves an idea of the holy importunity of these holy men of old. But if the Lord should bring on the church, as in those days, an awful persecution like this of Herod, the faithful in Christ would soon learn in what soul-felt prayer consists.—(37.)

4. "After the passover." The english translators have taken the word "easter" from the anglo-saxon service book, and version of the gospel. Easter is the name of a goddess whose festival was celebrated by our forefathers in the month of April.

Ver. 6—11. *Peter delivered from prison by an angel.*

Peter was free from anxiety about the event. The night before his intended execution he slept, though his posture must have been uneasy, chained to the two soldiers between whom he lay. A peaceful conscience, a lively hope, and the consolations of the Holy Spirit, can produce entire composure in the immediate prospect of death, even in those very persons who have been most distracted with terrors on that account.

It was the very night before Herod designed to bring him forth. God's time to help is when things are brought to the last extremity. There was but a step between him and death, yet he could lie down in peace, and sleep in the midst of his enemies, having a good cause that he suffered for, and a good conscience that he suffered with. He was assured that God would cause his trial to end in the way that should be most for his glory. Having committed his cause to Him that judgeth righteously, his soul dwelt at ease; and even in prison, between two soldiers, God gave him sleep, as he doth to his beloved. Gates and guards keep all his friends from him, but cannot keep the angels of God from him; and they invisibly encamp round about those who fear God, to deliver them, Ps. 34. 7. Wherever the people of God are, and

however surrounded, they have a way open heavenward, nor can any thing intercept their intercourse with God. A light shined in the prison. Though it was a dark place, and in the night, Peter shall see his way clearly. The angel roused him out of his sleep. His chains fell off his hands; God loosed his bands. He must gird himself; those who slept in their clothes, only ungirt themselves, so they had nothing to do when they got up, but to fasten their girdles. He must bind on his sandals, that he might be fit to walk. Those whose bonds are loosed by the power of Divine grace, must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He must cast his outer garment about him, and follow the angel. Those who are delivered out of spiritual imprisonment, must follow their Deliverer, as Israel when they went out of the house of bondage. They knew not whither they went, but knew whom they followed.

Peter thought he saw a vision. By this it appears it was not the first that he had seen, and that a heavenly vision was so plain, that it was hard to distinguish between what was done in fact and what was done in a vision. God sometimes answers prayer in so unexpected a manner that his people can scarcely believe it is a reality. He was led safely by the angel out of danger. When God will work salvation for his people, no difficulties in their way are insuperable: but even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord.

This deliverance of Peter represents our redemption by Christ, which not only proclaims liberty to the captives, but brings them out of the prison-house. The application of the redemption in the conversion of souls, is the sending forth the prisoners, by the blood of the covenant, out of the pit wherein is no water, Zech. 9. 11. The grace of God, like this angel of the Lord, brings light into the prison, by the opening of the understanding; smites the sleeping sinner on the side by the awakening of the conscience; causes the chains to fall off from the hands by the renewing of the will; and gives the word of command, Gird thyself, and follow me. Difficulties are to be passed through, and the opposition of Satan and his instruments, a first and second ward, an untoward generation, from which we shall be saved by the grace of God, if we put ourselves under Divine conduct. And at

length the iron gate of death shall be opened to us, to enter into the new Jerusalem, where we shall be perfectly freed from all the marks of our captivity, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

When this was done, the angel left Peter. Miracles are not to be expected, when ordinary means are to be used. Peter has now no more wards to pass, or iron gates to get through. So many surprising things coming together, put him into some confusion, but at length Peter recovering from his surprise tranquilly exercised his understanding, and found that it was not a dream, but a reality; "Now I know of a surety, now I know truly, now I know that it is truth, and not fancy. Now I am well satisfied, that the Lord Jesus has sent his angel, and by him has delivered me out of the hands of Herod, and so has disappointed all the expectation of the people of the Jews." Peter when he recollected himself, perceived of a truth what great things God had done for him. Thus souls delivered out of a spiritual bondage, are not at first aware what God has wrought in them; many have the truth of grace, that want the evidence of it. They question whether there is that change wrought in them, or whether they have not been all the while in a dream. But when the Comforter comes, whom the Father will send, sooner or later, he will let them know what a blessed change is wrought, and what a happy state they are brought into.

Ver. 12-19. *Peter proceeds to the house of Mary, and then departs. Herod's rage.*

Peter considered how great his deliverance was. What must he do next? God's providence leaves room for the use of our prudence; and though he has undertaken to perform and perfect what he has begun, he expects we should consider it. He went directly to the house of Mary, which, it seems, was used for the private meeting of the disciples; a church in the house makes it a little sanctuary. There he found many gathered together, praying at the dead time of the night, praying for Peter, that God would, some way or other, deliver him. Observe, they continued in prayer, in token of their importunity; they did not think it enough to have once presented his case to God. Thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint. As long as we are kept waiting for a mercy, we must continue praying



for it. It should seem that the next day was fixed for determining the affair, and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter, when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance; for he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. They gathered together for prayer on this occasion. They knew what encouragement Christ gave to joint prayer, Matt. 18. 19, 20. Peter came to them when they were thus employed; which was an immediate, present answer to their prayer. A damsel came to hearken. She knew Peter's voice. But sometimes, in a transport of affection to our friends, we do that which is unkind. In an ecstasy of joy she forgot herself, and opened not the gate. She ran in, and when she spake of Peter's being there, they said, Thou art mad; it is impossible it should be him. Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for we are most backward to believe. However, she stood to it that it was Peter. Then said they, It is his angel. Some think that they supposed his angel to appear as a presage of his approaching death. At length they let him in. The iron gate, which opposed his enlargement, opened of itself, without once knocking at it; the door of his friend's house must be long knocked at! But when they saw him, it was both surprising and pleasing to them in the highest degree, while he declared unto them how the Lord Jesus had brought him out of prison by an angel. The other apostles seem to have been absent from Jerusalem, but James, the son of Alphaeus, was in the neighbourhood, and Peter desired that he should be informed of this deliverance for his encouragement. He then deemed it his duty to retire to a place of safety. The christian law of self-denial and of suffering for Christ, has not abrogated the natural law of self-preservation, and care for our own safety, as far as God gives an opportunity of providing for it by lawful means.

The guards were in the utmost consternation, for they knew how highly penal it was to them to let a prisoner escape that they had charge of. Thus have the persecutors of the gospel of Christ often been filled with vexation to see its cause conquer, notwithstanding their opposition. Herod sought for Peter, and found him not. Who can find whom God hath hidden? In times of public danger, all believers have God for their hiding-place; which is so secret that the world

cannot find them. Herod finding that the keepers could give no satisfactory account how Peter got away, commanded that they should be put to death.

The instruments of persecution are themselves exposed to danger, the wrath of God hangs over all that engage in this hateful work; and the tyranny of persecutors, when hindered in its course, vents itself on all in its way. Herod went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode. He probably perceived that Peter had been rescued in a supernatural manner, as the apostles before had been, ch. 5. 17—23. This might induce him to suspend the persecution, and his disappointment at being thus baffled might hasten his departure from Jerusalem. Josephus mentions this coming of Herod to Cesarea, at the end of the third year of his reign, to solemnize games in honour of the Roman emperor.

15. Probably they considered that it was Peter's tutelary angel, according to an idea general among the Jews, and held by some amongst the Gentiles, that one was appointed, at least, to every good person. A notion also has been prevalent in every age that such a being, on the death of a person, sometimes appears to his friends in the form of the deceased.

17. Scripture does not afford us the least information as to the place where Peter secreted himself, or whether he went.

Ver. 20—23. *The death of Herod.*

God reckoned with Herod, not only for his putting James to death, but for his design and endeavour to put Peter to death; sinners will be called to account, not only for the wickedness of their deeds, but the wickedness of their endeavours.

The men of Tyre and Sidon had offended Herod. The offenders being convinced that it was vain to contend with such an adversary, they were willing on any terms to make peace with him. Being cities wholly engaged in trade, they depended upon Judea for corn and other provisions as formerly, Ezek. 27. 17. Herod, by preventing their supplies, could soon have brought them to distress. They made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, (it is very likely with bribes,) and a time is fixed for their ambassadors to make a public submission.

Herod appeared in all his pomp and grandeur. Foolish people value men by their outward appearance. He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon; proud enough that he had them in his power. The people, impressed by his splendour and oratory, or courted his favour by abominable flattery, exclaimed it

was the voice of a god! Many heathen princes had claimed and received Divine honours, but it was far more horrible impiety in Herod, who was acquainted with the word and worship of the living God, to accept such idolatrous and sacrilegious adorations without rebuking the blasphemy. But such men as Herod ripen apace for signal vengeance, when inflated with pride and arrogance.

Observe how his iniquity was punished; Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. God is jealous for his own honour, and will be glorified upon those whom he is not glorified by. Herod was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. His body putrefied while he was yet alive; so Antiochus and other persecutors have died. See here what vile bodies we carry about with us; they have in them the seeds of their own dissolution, by which they will soon be destroyed, whenever God does but speak the word. See what contemptible creatures God makes to be the instruments of his justice when he pleases. See how God brings down proud men, in such a way as pours most contempt upon them. Herod is not only destroyed, but destroyed by worms, the pride of his glory is effectually stained.

Observe the progress of the gospel after this. The word of God grew and multiplied, as seed sown, which comes up with a great increase; wherever the gospel was preached, multitudes embraced it, and were added to the church by it. When such a persecutor was taken off by a dreadful judgment, many were convinced that the cause of christianity was the cause of Christ, and embraced it.

Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch. As soon as they had paid the money to the proper persons, and taken care about the due distribution, they left Jerusalem, see ch. 11. 30. If a minister is called abroad on any service, when he has fulfilled that ministry, he ought to remember that he has work to do at home which calls him thither. Barnabas and Saul, when they returned to Antioch, took with them John, whose surname was Mark. Educating young men for the ministry, and entering them into it, is a very good work for elder ministers, and of good service to the rising generation.

Observe, we may learn wisdom from the people of Tyre and Sidon, for we have offended the Lord with our sins. We de-

pend on him for life and breath and all things; it surely then behoves us to humble ourselves before him, that through the appointed Mediator, who is ever ready to befriend us, we may be reconciled to Him, before wrath come upon us to the uttermost, as it did upon proud Herod. But a haughty spirit is before a fall, God resisteth the proud, and the triumphing of the wicked is short. The cause of the gospel has outlived many such boasting persecutors, and their ruin will make way for its further progress, and those who labour to promote it shall go from strength to strength, and proceed from one service to another, till their work is done, and they enter the glorious mansions, from whence their eyes shall behold the destruction of workers of iniquity.

21. *Josephus* mentions some of these particulars, and adds others. It was on the second day of the games celebrated in honour of the Roman emperor, that Herod thus addressed the people. He wore a robe richly wrought with silver, which dazzled the eyes of the beholders when the sun shone upon it. The people, chiefly Gentiles, set on by his flatterers, appear to have regarded Herod as a god, in the same qualified sense as they applied the Divine titles to their emperors. The Jews were much displeased with his receiving this impious adoration. *Josephus* does not so directly attribute the tyrant's death to the immediate effects of Divine displeasure, but he only narrates the secondary causes, and it is plain that he considered it as the effect of more than human interposition, and out of the common course of events. The disease appears to have been the morbus pedicularis, of which, it is remarkable, many other tyrants have died.

25. John Mark, who was a different person from Mark the evangelist, was an intimate companion of the apostle Peter, and seems to have been converted by him, from the title of son used 1 Pet. 5. 13. This John Mark was the son of Mary, ver. 12, and sister's son to Barnabas, Col. 4. 10. His shrinking from the difficulties encountered by the apostles, afterwards occasioned a separation between Paul and Barnabas. But he seems subsequently to have retrieved his character, Col. 4. 10; 2 Tim. 4. 11; Philem. 24.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1—3. *The mission of Paul and Barnabas.*

The church at Antioch was furnished with good ministers, ch. 11. 20; men eminent for gifts, graces, and usefulness.

Five are here mentioned by name. 1. Barnabas, a Levite of Cyprus, who sold his estate, and threw the money into the common stock, see ch. 4. 36. 2. Simeon called Niger. He was probably a negro, or if not, of a dark and swarthy complexion. Many a lovely soul has inhabited an ungracious body. Let us learn to value

the qualities of the mind above those of the body. 3. Lucius of Cyrene. He is mentioned in the close of the epistle to the Romans, and some have thought he was the Luke that wrote these Acts. 4. Manaen, foster-brother to Herod Antipas; in his infancy reared with him. What different courses do men take who once were companions! Herod and Manaen, brought up together, one becomes a profligate, a persecutor, the murderer of John, awfully mocking Christ, and dying an exile,—the other a disciple of Jesus, and a preacher of the gospel. By grace are we saved. The Lord makes us to differ from others. Had Manaen joined his young and royal companion in sin, he might have gained worldly advancement. And was he a loser? He could not be a loser, for the lips of Truth have said it. His advantages were now sanctified, and he was usefully employed. 5. Saul, the apostle to the Gentiles—one of the most extraordinary individuals recorded in history. What an assemblage was here!—(42.)

The Lord raises up instruments for his work, from various places and situations in life, and zeal for his glory induces them to renounce even flattering connexions and prospects, to promote his cause.

While these persons were observing a season of solemn fasting and prayer, to seek a further blessing on their labours, and direction concerning their further progress, they were ordered by an immediate suggestion of the Spirit, to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto he had called them. This language evidently implies the personality and the Deity of the Holy Ghost.

1. It is by the Spirit of Christ that his ministers are both qualified for his service, inclined to it, and taken from other cares inconsistent with it. 2. Christ's ministers are separated to him and to the Holy Ghost: Separate them to me; they are to be employed in Christ's work, and under the Spirit's guidance, to the glory of God the Father. 3. All that are separated to Christ as his ministers, are separated to work: Christ keeps no servants to be idle. If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work; that is it which he is separated to, to labour in the word and doctrine. They are separated to take pains, not to take state. 4. The work of Christ's ministers, to which they are to be separated, is that which all Christ's ministers have been called to,

and they have first been, by an inward call, directed to, and have chosen.

Barnabas and Saul both of them had been ministers long before this, but a particular service in the ministry required a fresh commission; which commission God saw fit, at this time, to transmit by the hands of these prophets and teachers.

1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for. 2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations. 3. They laid their hands on them. They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, and that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. Whatever means are used, or rules observed for ordinary ministers, the Holy Ghost alone can fit them for their important work, and call them to it.

Ver. 4—13. *Elymas the sorcerer.*

Barnabas and Saul being sent forth, the Holy Ghost was their great support and encouragement in this undertaking. They preached the word of God, wherever they came, in the synagogues of the Jews; they gave them the preference, and so left those among them who believed not inexcusable. They laid their doctrine open to the rulers of their synagogues, who might, if they had any thing to say, object against it. They had John to be their assistant in the things of God.

Paphos was infamous for its heathen rites. There a Gentile, Sergius Paulus by name, encouraged the apostles, and was willing to hear their message. He was governor of the country, under the Roman emperor. He was an intelligent, considerate man. Though he was a great man, and the preachers of the gospel were men that made no figure, yet, if they have a message from God, he would know what it is.

Elymas, a Jew, did all he could to obstruct their progress. He was a false prophet; skilled in the arts of divination. He sought to turn the deputy from the faith, ver. 8, to keep him from receiving the gospel. Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men in power, to keep them from being religious, for their example will influence many.

Saul is here for the first time called Paul, and never after Saul. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome. He

spoke to Elymas with holy indignation. It is said that, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, he fixed his eyes on Elymas, and gave him his true character, but not in passion. He describes him to be, first, an agent for hell. In two things Elymas resembled the devil as a child does his father. 1. In craft and in malice. A fulness of subtilty and mischief together, make a man indeed a child of the devil. 2. An adversary to heaven. Those that are enemies to the doctrine of Jesus, are enemies to all righteousness, for in it all righteousness is fulfilled. He charged upon him his present crime, and expostulated with him upon it. The ways of the Lord are right; they are all so, they are perfectly so. The ways of the Lord Jesus are right, the only right ways to heaven and happiness. There are those who not only wander from these ways themselves, but mislead others, and suggest unjust prejudices against these ways. These commonly are so hardened, that though the equity of those ways is set before them by the most powerful and commanding evidence, they will not cease to do evil.

To prove that this rebuke was warranted of God, Paul denounced sentence on Elymas, that he should be blind for a season; but if he repented, the calamity might at length be removed. This sentence was immediately executed; being in darkness, and filled with horror, he sought for some one to lead him out of the place, being unable to find his way; an apt emblem of the benighted state of his soul!

This miraculous proof of the apostles' power, being connected with the other evidences of the truth of the gospel, and made effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit, induced the proconsul to embrace christianity; he was astonished at the energy of the doctrine upon his own heart and conscience, and at the power of God by which it was confirmed. The doctrine of Christ is astonishing; and the more we know of it, the more reason we shall see to wonder at it.

They went to Perga. Those that went were Paul and his company, which, it is probable, was increased in Cyprus. Then John Mark quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem, without the consent of Paul and Barnabas. It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again. Those who put their hand to the plough and look back,

are not fit for the kingdom of God. If not prepared to face opposition, and to endure hardship, they are not qualified for the work of the ministry.

Such is the state of human nature, that those persons who cannot do much good in society, are often, by their imprudence, the cause of much harm, even when they intend otherwise.—(51.)

7. The title given by Luke to Sergius Paulus, has been supposed to belong only to governors of provincial dignity, and that it could not properly be applied to the governors of Cyprus; but a coin and an ancient inscription have been found, each of which confirms the correctness of the sacred historian.

9. It is generally supposed that Saul now changed his name, because he was brought much among the Greeks and Romans, to whom his Hebrew name was unknown, and who would naturally pronounce it as Paul. See *Beza*, who thinks the family of Sergius might be the first who addressed him thus; or the governor may have given him his own name.

Ver. 14—31. *Paul's discourse at Antioch.*

The history of the apostles' travels, as that of Christ's, passes, by many things. The next place we find them in, is Antioch, in Pisidia, a province of Asia Minor. Many Jews lived there, and Paul's sermon to them, which we have in these verses, it is likely, is the substance of what was generally preached by the apostles to the Jews, to show them how the New Testament, which they would have them receive, agreed with the Old.

Paul and Barnabas met the Jews in their place of worship, in the synagogue. Sabbath-days should be kept holy in solemn assemblies, for public worship. Though strangers they were admitted into the synagogue. Care should be taken in places of public worship, that strangers be accommodated, even the poorest.

The usual service of the synagogue was performed; the law and the prophets were read, a portion of each. When we come together to worship God, we must do it not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God. When that was done, they were asked by the rulers of the synagogue to give them a sermon. The bare reading of the scriptures in public assemblies is not sufficient; they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of them. This is assisting people in doing that which is necessary to make the word profitable—the application of it unto themselves.

Every thing is touched in this sermon, which might prevail with Jews to receive

and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah. Paul owns them to be God's favourite people, whom he had taken into special relation to himself, and for whom he had done great things. That God had chosen their fathers to be his friends. That he had exalted that people, and with a high hand brought them out of Egypt, where they were not only strangers, but captives. That he had suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness; he had exercised a great deal of patience with them. They were a provoking, murmuring, unbelieving people; and yet he suffered his anger many a time to be turned away by the prayer and intercession of Moses. So many years as we have each of us lived in this world, we must own that God has thus been as a tender father to us, has supplied our wants, has fed us all our life long unto this day, has been indulgent to us, a God of pardons, (as he was to Israel, Neh. 9. 17,) and not extreme to mark what we have done amiss. God put Israel in possession of the land of Canaan. Every view, however slight, of the Lord's dealings with his church, reminds us of his mercy and long-suffering, and of man's ingratitude and perverseness.

He had raised up men, to deliver them out of the hands of those that invaded and oppressed them. At last, he made David their king. His character was, a man after God's own heart; one in whom God is well pleased, whom he approves. This character was given of him before he was first anointed. See 1 Sam. 13. 14. He shall desire and endeavour to do the will of God, be enabled to do it, and employed in the doing of it.

Their deliverance out of Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, were types and figures of good things to come; the changes of their government showed that it made nothing perfect, and therefore must give way to the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah.

Paul passes from David to the Son of David, and shows that this Jesus is his promised seed; a Saviour to do that for them, which the judges of old could not do—to save them from their sins, their worst enemies. A Saviour God, raised up to be a Saviour unto Israel; to them in the first place. Of the seed of David, raised up according to his promise, the promise to the Old Testament church, in the latter times of it; I will raise unto

David a righteous Branch, Jer. 23. 5. This promise was that to which the twelve tribes hoped to come; why then should they entertain it so coldly?

John the Baptist was Christ's harbinger and forerunner; he made way for the entrance of Jesus, by preaching the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. But the rulers and people of the Jews, who should have welcomed him, and have been willing subjects, were his persecutors and murderers. When the apostles preached Christ as the Saviour, they were so far from concealing his ignominious death, that they always preached Christ crucified; yea, and though that added much to the reproach of his sufferings, crucified by his own people.

Their sin was, that though they could not prove Jews guilty of any crime, yet they compelled Pilate to crucify him, not only contrary to his inclination, but contrary to his conscience. The reason of this was, because they did not understand, nor consider, that it was foretold the Messiah should suffer.

It is possible that men may be fulfilling scripture prophecies, even when they are breaking scripture precepts; particularly in the persecution of the church, as in the persecution of Christ. All that was foretold concerning the sufferings of the Messiah, was fulfilled in Christ; they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. Christ was separated from this world, as those who are buried have nothing more to do with this world, nor this world with them. Therefore our complete separation from sin is represented by our being buried with Christ. But he rose again from the dead, and saw no corruption: this was the great truth to be preached; it is the main pillar by which the whole fabric of the gospel is supported; and there was sufficient proof that Christ was risen.

Many who read the prophets, do not know the voice of the prophets, do not understand the meaning of the scriptures; they have the sound of the gospel in their ears, but not the sense of it in their heads, or the savour of it in their hearts.

15. See the general note, Synagogues.

18. Or, as in the margin, perhaps the reading is, "bore or fed them, as a nurse beareth or feedeth her child."

20. We may take the words to mean, "And after these things, which lasted about the space of 450 years, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."—*Townsend*. This is, from the time when God chose the fathers, to the time

the land was divided to them by lot, was nearly 450 years, and then God appointed judges in Israel. Or, *Lightfoot* concludes that it means the years of the judges with those of the periods in which Israel was oppressed, which together make up 450 years. Chronologers have perplexed themselves with various other solutions of the difficulties, but either of the above is a sufficient explanation.

22. See the note on the character of David at the end of 2 Samuel.

Ver. 32—37. *Paul's discourse at Antioch.*

The resurrection of Christ was the performance of the promise made to the patriarchs. In declaring this the apostles declared glad tidings, which should be particularly acceptable to the Jews; for it is in the resurrection of Christ, that the promise made to their fathers was fulfilled to them. Paul acknowledges it to be the dignity of the Jewish nation, that to them pertained the promises, Rom. 9, 4, as they were children of the patriarchs to whom the promises were first made. The great promise of the Old Testament was that of the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. God hath raised up Jesus, advanced him, and exalted him. This is the fulfilling of the promises made to the fathers, the promise of sending the Messiah, and of all the benefits and blessings to be had with him and by him. If those who preached the gospel brought these glad tidings, they ought to receive them as their best friends, and to embrace the doctrine. And the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, was so far from infringing the promise to the Jews, that the promise itself could not otherwise be accomplished.

The resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God; and confirms what is written in the second Psalm; Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. That the resurrection of Christ from the dead was designed to evidence and evince this, is plain from Rom. 1, 4; He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.

It was impossible he should be held by death, because he was the Son of God, and consequently had life in himself, which he could not lay down but with a design to resume it. When his eternal generation is spoken of, it is proper to say, This day have I begotten thee; for from everlasting to everlasting is with God as one and the same eternal day. It may also be accommodated to his resurrection; This day have I made it to appear, that

I have begotten thee; and this day have I begotten all that are given to thee: for it is said, 1 Pet. 1, 3, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our God and Father, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

His being raised the third day, so as not to see corruption, and to a heavenly life, so as no more to return to corruption, to the state of the dead, as others did who were raised to life, further confirms his being the promised Messiah. This makes them sure mercies indeed, that He who is intrusted with the dispensing of them, is risen to die no more: so that he ever lives to see his own will executed, and the blessings he hath purchased for us given to us.

The sure mercies of David are that everlasting life, of which the resurrection was a sure pledge, and the blessings of redemption in Christ are a certain earnest, even in this world.—(62.)

God had promised to David that he would raise up the Messiah of his seed, who should therefore be a Man, but should not, like other men, see corruption. This promise could not be accomplished in David, but looked forward to Christ.

He was the only one who had been so raised from the dead as not to return thither, or experience corruption.—(75.)

Here we have a short account of the patriarch David. 1. His life; he served his own generation by the will of God. David was a useful good man; he did good in the world by the will of God. He served the good of men; but did not serve the will of man. David was a very great blessing to the age wherein he lived. We were not born for ourselves, but we are members of communities, to which we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference between David and Christ; that David was to serve only that generation in which he lived, but Christ was to serve all generations. 2. His death; he fell asleep. All God's servants have their work assigned; and when they have accomplished as a hireling their day, then, and not till then, they are called to rest. God's witnesses never die till they have finished their testimony; and then the sleep, the death of the labouring man will be sweet. 3. His burial; the grave is the habitation of those who are gone before us, Ps. 49, 19. 4. His continuance in the grave; we are sure he

did not rise again; this St. Peter insists upon, when he freely speaks of the patriarch David; ch. 2. 29. He saw corruption, therefore that promise could not have its accomplishment in him. But it was accomplished in the Lord Jesus; for He rose the third day, and therefore did not see corruption then; and he rose to die no more, and therefore never did. Of Him therefore the promise must be understood, and no other.

May we look to him who is declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, that by faith in him we may walk with God, and serve our generation according to his will; and when death comes, may we fall asleep in him, with a joyful hope of a blessed resurrection.

33. This application of Ps. 2. 7, expresses, not the effecting, but the announcement of the Messiah's sonship.—*J. P. Smith.*

Ver. 38—41. *Paul's discourse at Antioch.*

Having given a full account of the Lord Jesus, Paul makes his application. It is sent to you Jews first for a word of salvation; if it be not so, it is your own fault. To you, men, this is sent, not to the angels that sinned. To you living men, not to the dead, whose day of grace is over. He speaks to them as men and brethren; and so we are to look upon all that stand fair with us for the great salvation, to look on them as having the word of salvation sent to them.

Observe, it will be their unspeakable advantage if they embrace Jesus Christ, and believe this word of salvation; it will relieve them where their greatest danger lies; that is from the guilt of their sins. Let all that hear the gospel of Christ, know these two things: *First*, That through this Man, who died and rose again, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and they may be so without any injury to God's honour. We are to preach repentance for the remission of sins, and Divine grace, giving both repentance and remission of sins. The remission of sins is through this Man; by his sufferings it was purchased, in his name it is offered, and by his authority it is bestowed; therefore you are interested in him. We preach to you the forgiveness of sins; that is the salvation we bring you, the word of God; therefore look upon us as your friends, and messengers of good tidings. *Secondly*, It does that for us which the law of Moses could not do. The Jews were jealous for

the law, and because it prescribed expiatory and pacificatory sacrifices, and a great variety of purifications, fancied they might be justified by it before God. No, saith Paul, be it known to you, that it is by Christ only that those who believe in him, and none else, are justified from all things, from all the guilt and stain of sin, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. The great concern of convicted sinners is, to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. Those are truly justified from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner, he is undone. It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses; not by his moral law, for we have all broken it, and are transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us, it condemns us; not by his ceremonial law, for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution; see Heb. 9. 4; 10. 1—4. But by Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge, but by him as our Righteousness, the Lord our Righteousness. All that believe in Christ, that rely upon him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him, and none but they. What the law could not do for us, in that it was weak, the gospel of Christ does. Through Him all that believed would be completely justified from every charge brought against them, on account of any of their sins; this is the most needful blessing, introducing every other.

Observe also, It is at their utmost peril if they reject the gospel of Christ. Those to whom the gospel is preached, are concerned to beware lest they refuse the grace offered. The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners, is designed to awaken us to beware lest it come upon us. Take heed lest the guilt come upon you, which was spoken of in the prophets—the guilt of despising the gospel and the offers of it, and despising the Gentiles who were advanced to partake of it. It is the ruin of many, that they despise religion. Take heed lest the judgment come upon you which was spoken of in the prophets. They that will not wonder and be saved, shall wonder and perish. Their privileges make their

condemnation the more intolerable. Let the unbelieving Jews expect that God will work a work in their days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. This may be understood as a prediction of their sin; that they should not believe in that great work of God, the redemption of the world by Christ, though in the most solemn manner declared unto them. Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible, and of his declaring who cannot lie, yet they would not credit it. And also of their destruction and the dispersion of their people. The calamities brought upon them were such as never before were brought upon any people, Matt. 24. 21.

Woes assuredly will come upon those despisers who will neither believe the testimony of God concerning the redemption he hath wrought, nor concerning the judgment he hath appointed, but treat the declaration of them with infidel contempt, or careless indifference. Be not then afraid to believe what an apostle was not afraid to preach; what God the Holy Spirit inspired. Be assured it is a doctrine according to godliness, however strange to the natural man, however doubtful it may appear to the natural heart. Once learn thus to see God as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus; to see him accepting your persons, pardoning your sins, and a life of holy and devoted obedience will assuredly follow. Who ever work so hard as those who work for love? "Talk of morality! Thou bleeding Lamb, the true morality is love to thee!" because it is the root, the well-spring, the motive of every christian virtue, of every acceptable deed of christian morality and obedience.—(8.)

Ver. 42—52. *Paul preaches to the Gentiles. He is persecuted by the Jews.*

It is good to have the word of Christ repeated. What we have heard, we should desire to hear again, that it may take deep root in us. Many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed the apostles. They were exhorted and encouraged to persevere, to continue in the grace of God; to continue in belief of the gospel of grace, dependence upon the Spirit of grace, and attendance upon the means of grace.

The next sabbath-day almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. Some came out of curiosity; and many who had heard something of the word of God, came to hear more; to hear it, not as the word of men, but as the word of God,

by which we must be ruled and judged. The Jews were enraged thereby. This was the same spirit that worked in the pharisees toward Christ. They opposed the doctrine the apostles preached, with the utmost imaginable spite and rage; and when they could find no objection, they blasphemed Christ and his gospel. Commonly those who begin with contradicting, end with blaspheming.

The apostles solemnly and openly declare themselves at liberty to bring the word of salvation to the Gentiles. In declaring this they waxed bold. When adversaries of Christ's cause begin to be daring, its advocates should be the bolder.

Now Paul and Barnabas, having made the offer of gospel grace, here give them notice of their bringing it to the Gentiles. While many thus judge themselves unworthy of eternal life, others, who appear less likely, desire to hear more of the glad tidings of salvation.

The apostles justify themselves in this. This is according to what was foretold in the Old Testament. Christ is not only the Saviour, but the Salvation; is himself our Righteousness, and Life, and Strength. Wherever Christ is designed to be Salvation, he is set up to be a Light; he enlightens the understanding, and so saves the soul. He is, and is to be Light and Salvation to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. Those of any nation should be welcome to him; some of every nation have heard of him, Rom. 10. 18; and all nations shall at length become his kingdom. The Gentiles embraced what the Jews rejected. 1. They took the comfort of it. Our being put into the way of salvation ought to be the matter of our rejoicing. Many grieve under doubts whether they have an interest in Christ or not, when they should be rejoicing that they may have an interest in him. 2. They gave God the praise of it; They glorified the word of the Lord; that is, Christ, the essential Word. Or the gospel; the more they knew of it, the more they admired it. O! what light, what power, what a treasure does this gospel bring with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! How far transcending all other institutions! How plainly divine and heavenly is its original! Those speak best of the honour of the word of the Lord, that speak experimentally, who have themselves been captivated by its power, and comforted by its sweetness.



Many became obedient to the faith. God, by his Spirit, wrought true faith in them, for whom he had in his counsels from everlasting designed happiness to everlasting. Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual. God gave this grace to believe, to all those among them, who were ordained to eternal life; for whom he had predestinated, them he also called, Rom. 8. 30; or, as many as were disposed to eternal life; as many as had concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God hath treasured up that life, 1 John 5, 11; and who is the only Way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. Those will be brought to believe in Christ, who by his grace are well disposed to eternal life, and make that their aim. But we know not who these are, and must declare that Jesus is put for a light of the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth, publishing his truth as widely as we can.

When they believed, they did what they could to spread the knowledge of Christ and his gospel among their neighbours. Those who have got acquaintance with Christ themselves, will do what they can to bring others acquainted with him. Those in great and rich cities, that have received the gospel, should do what they can to get it published in the country, among the poor and unlearned, who have souls to save as well as they. But the unbelieving Jews, being destitute of authority, excited some women of rank, who were zealous for the Jewish religion, and by their means the magistrates were stirred up to banish the apostles. They having solemnly warned their persecutors, as Christ commanded, went to Iconium.

Satan and his agents are most exasperated against the preachers of the gospel when they see them go on successfully: this has been the common lot of the very best of men. It is good to see honourable women devout and well affected to religious worship; the less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their souls: but it is sad, when, under colour of devotion to God, they conceive an enmity to Christ. What, women persecutors! Let those therefore that have zeal, see that it be according to knowledge.

The new converts, instead of being discouraged, were filled with holy joy, being made partakers of the extraordinary gifts,

as well as the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost. Thus the word of God will be glorified in the midst of persecutions, and he will, by the Holy Spirit, render his disciples triumphant over all the power and subtilty of the enemy of their souls. The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face the difficulties we meet in the profession of godliness.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1-7. *Paul and Barnabas at Iconium.*

Though the Jews at Antioch used Paul and Barnabas barbarously, yet they did not decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium. Let not those of any denomination be condemned altogether. They spake so plainly, so convincingly, with such evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with such power; so warmly, so affectionately, and with such manifest concern for the souls of men, that those who heard them could not but say, God was with them of a truth. Yet the success was not to be attributed to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God, who used that means.

Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of the apostles' trouble here, as elsewhere. But they continued in the work, notwithstanding this opposition. Perseverance in doing good, amidst dangers and hardships, is a blessed evidence of grace, an expression of the mind that is in Christ, and a distinguishing mark of his faithful ministers. Wherever his servants are driven, they should seek opportunities of declaring the truth.

Observe what animated them; They spake boldly in the Lord, in his strength, not depending on any thing in themselves. They were strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Christ worked with the apostles, according to his promise, *Lo I am with you always*. When they went on in his name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace. The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us, the means of his good work in us. It is the word of Christ's grace; in Him alone we find favour with God. Christ himself attested this word of grace, who is the faithful Witness; he has assured us it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. It is said particularly concerning

the apostles, the Lord confirmed their testimony in the miracles they wrought, as well as in the wonders done by their word on men's minds by the power of Divine grace.

Among the rulers and persons of rank, and among the common people, some held with the unbelieving Jews, others with the apostles. Barnabas is reckoned an apostle, for he was set apart by especial designation of the Holy Ghost to the service of the Gentiles.

We may here see the meaning of Christ's prediction, that he came not to send peace upon earth, but rather division, Luke 12. 51—53. Let us not think it strange if the preaching of the gospel occasion division, nor be offended at it.

The opposers broke out into violent out-rages. The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, yet united against christians. If the church's enemies unite for its destruction, shall not its friends unite for its preservation?

The apostles, knowing the design against them, got away to Lystra and Derbe, and there found safety. God has shelters for his people in a storm; nay, he is, and will be himself their hiding-place. They also found work, which was what they went for. When the door of opportunity was shut against them at Iconium, it was opened at Lystra and Derbe. In times of persecution, ministers may see cause to quit a spot, though they do not quit the work.

Ver. 8—18. *A cripple healed at Lystra—The people would have sacrificed to Paul and Barnabas.*

Paul wrought a miraculous cure at Lystra upon a cripple who had been lame from his birth. This represents the impotency of all the children of men, in spiritual things, from their birth, till the grace of God puts strength into them; for it was when we were yet without strength, that Christ died for the ungodly, Rom. 5. 6. It was well known that this cripple never had walked. He heard Paul preach, and believed the message was from heaven, and that the messengers had Divine power with them. Paul perceived that he had faith to be healed; desired it, hoped for it. God will not disappoint desires or hopes of his own raising. Paul spake to him with a loud voice, that the people about might take notice. The man leaped and walked, to show that he was perfectly cured, and that immediately.

None can profit by the power of Christ, as exercised through his ministers and ordinances, until they are made partakers of faith, but all things are possible to those that believe. When we receive this most precious gift of God, we shall be delivered from that spiritual impotency in which we were born, and from the dominion of habits since contracted; we shall be enabled to stand upright and walk with cheerfulness in the ways of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas were strangers; they appeared mean and despicable; yet the working this one miracle made them truly great and honourable in the eyes of this people. The people imagined that they were Divine powers, no less than gods, though in the likeness of men. This notion agreed with the pagan theology, and the fabulous accounts they had of their gods. They called Barnabas, Jupiter. Probably he was the senior, and had something of majesty in his countenance. Paul they called Mercury, who was the chief speaker, and had most command of language. The priest prepared to sacrifice to them. When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared in the likeness of men, and did very many miracles, men were so far from doing sacrifice to him, that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice; but Paul and Barnabas, upon their working one miracle, are deified presently. The same power of the god of this world, which prejudices the carnal mind against truth, makes errors and mistakes find easy admission.

When the apostles heard this, they rent their clothes. We do not find that they rent their clothes when the people spake of stoning them: but when they spake of worshipping them, they could not bear it; being more concerned for God's honour than their own. They did not suggest to themselves that it might contribute to the safety of their persons and the success of their ministry, if they suffered the people to continue in this mistake. God's truth needs not the service of man's lie. Christ had put honour enough upon them in making them apostles. Their running among the people showed that they were far from looking upon themselves as gods. They ran in, as men in earnest. The servants of God often might easily obtain undue honours if they would connive at men's errors and vices, but they must dread and detest such homage, more than any reproach. They reasoned

with them, crying out, that all might hear, urging that they were naturally subject to the same infirmities of the human nature, and liable to the same calamities of the human life; not only men, but sinful men and suffering men, therefore the very reverse of deities. "If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from." They take this occasion to show how necessary it was that they should turn to God from idols, 1 Thess. 1. 9. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had only to preach the grace of God in Christ; but when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion. They preached to the Gentiles,

1. That the gods which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies in their worship, were vanities, of which no rational account could be given, nor any real advantage gained from them.

2. They had hitherto worshipped dead images, which were utterly unable to help them, or dying men, who would soon be disabled to help them; but now they are persuaded to worship the living God, who has life in himself, and life for us, and lives for evermore.

3. This God is the Creator of the world, the Fountain of all being and power; then worship the God who made you and all the world; worship the true God; worship the sovereign Lord of all, and bow not down to his creatures and subjects.

4. The world owed to God's patience, that destruction had not come upon it for idolatry. We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations, that God suffered them to walk in their own ways. God's patience with us hitherto, should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him.

5. The common bounties of providence witness plainly to us, that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely and with design. The benefits we have by these bounties, witness to us, that we ought to make our acknowledgments, not to the creatures who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator who makes them so. We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness; that he gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful. And if our bodies are filled with food, and our hearts with gladness, they ought to be

filled with love and thankfulness, and enlarged in duty and obedience, Deut. 8. 10; 28. 47. This was very bold and decided language to these idolaters and their priests, at such a critical moment, and it has been properly contrasted with the temporizing conduct of the heathen philosophers, who, though convinced of the folly and falsehood of their common religion, not only conformed to it, but instructed their pupils therein. Thus they made hypocrisy part of their instruction, and, as much as they could, confirmed the most foolish idolatry. Compare this conduct and declaration of the apostles with some modern views, in which the worship of God, by any name, is supposed to be equally acceptable to Him.

By these sayings, with much ado, they restrained the people from doing sacrifice to them; so strongly were these idolaters set upon their idolatry! We may see here what gave rise to pagan idolatry; it was terminating those regards in the instruments of our comfort, which should have passed through them to the Author. The most powerful arguments, the most earnest and affectionate address, even enforced by miracles, are scarcely sufficient to restrain men from absurdities and abominations; much less can they, without special grace, convert the hearts of sinners to God and to holiness.

The Lord saw it good to suffer all nations long to walk in their own ways, and multitudes are still left to follow lying vanities. Let this lead us to thankfulness for our peculiar advantages, and to adore the depth of his unsearchable wisdom and justice, but let us never attempt to excuse the idolatries or impieties of our apostate race.

10. Several manuscripts and ancient versions contain this addition, in the words of the apostle, "I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, &c."

15. It was a heathen tradition that Jupiter had formerly visited Lyconia in human form, and had been displeased with the reception given him, which probably made the people apprehensive of the consequences if they again incurred his indignation.

Ver. 19—28. *Paul stoned at Lystra. The churches revisited.*

Certain Jews from Antioch incensed the people against Paul and Barnabas. See how restless the rage of the Jews was against the gospel of Christ. The people stoned Paul, not by a judicial sentence, but in a popular tumult. So strong is the

bent of the corrupt and carnal heart, that as it is with great difficulty that men are restrained from evil on one side, so it is with great ease that they are persuaded to evil on the other side. Those who a few days before would have treated the apostles as more than men, now treated them as the worst of malefactors. If Paul would have been Mercury, he might have been enshrined; but if he will be a faithful minister of Christ, he shall be stoned, and thrown out of the city. Thus those who easily submit to strong delusions, hate to receive the truth in the love of it. This should teach us not to desire or to value popularity or human applause, but to seek only the honour that cometh from the unchangeable God, at whose disposal are safety, life, and comfort.

The disciples stood around Paul to see whether he were alive or dead; and all of a sudden he rose up. Though he was not dead, yet it was not without a miracle that he came so soon to himself, and was at once so well as to be able to go into the city. God's faithful servants, though brought within a step of death, and looked upon as dead, both by friends and enemies, shall not die so long as he has work for them to do. The next day Paul and Barnabas departed to Derbe, where they preached the gospel. Having stayed there as long as they thought fit, they came back to the cities where they had preached. As we had a very instructive account of the methods they took in beginning the good work, so here we have their building upon that foundation, and carrying on that good work.

1. They confirmed the souls of the disciples. Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintance set before them the danger of a change; they are allured by the prospect of preferment; they are frightened with swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of going back; but the apostles tell them that this is the true grace of God wherein they stand, and there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of Him. Whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. This confirms the souls of the disciples in the strength of Christ, to adhere to him, whatever it costs them. Those who

are converted need to be confirmed; those who are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. The best ministers can do that only by pressing things proper to bind the soul; the grace of God, and nothing less, effectually confirms the souls of the disciples, and prevents apostasy.

2. They exhorted them to continue in the faith; or they encouraged them to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Those who are in the faith are concerned to continue in the faith, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it. And it is requisite that they should often be exhorted to do so.

3. They insisted most upon this, that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. All who will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither. This, when fairly stated and taken entire, will help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. It is true, we must count upon much tribulation, but this is encouraging that we shall not be lost and perish in it. We shall get through it into the kingdom of God; the joy and glory of the end, will make abundant amends for all difficulties and hardships in the way.

They ordained elders or presbyters in every church. At this second visit they settled them in some order, under the conduct of a ministry. By prayer joined with fasting they commended them to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus, on whom they believed. When persons are brought to believe sincerely, there is still need of watching over them, of still instructing and admonishing them. The ministers who take most care of those that believe, must commend them to the Lord by prayer. It is great encouragement that such can say, It is He in whom they believed, we commit them to him, who have committed themselves to him, and have believed in One who is able to keep what they and we have committed to him against that day, 2 Tim. 1. 12.

The Person to whose power and grace the converts and the newly established churches are commended, clearly was the Lord Jesus, "on whom they had believed." It was an act of adoration, and manifestly recognised in Him that invincible power, which in the most hazardous circumstances could keep his followers from falling, and guarantee that they should

never perish, nor should any snatch them out of his hand.—(95.)

From Antioch they passed throughout Pisidia, thence they came into the province of Pamphilia. From Attalia they came by sea to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God. They did not tell what they had done, for that would have savoured of vain glory, but of what God had done with them and by them. The praise of all the little good we do at any time, must be ascribed to God; for it is he that not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but also worketh with us to make what we do successful. Ministers' preaching, even Paul's, can do nothing without God's grace. They told how God had inclined the hearts of many people to accept the gospel invitation. There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith: we must firmly believe in Christ, or we have no part in him. It is God who opens the door of faith, who opens to us the truths we are to believe, opens our hearts to receive them. We have reason to be thankful that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, has both sent them his gospel, which is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. 16. 26; and has also given them hearts to entertain the gospel. Thus the gospel was spread, it shined more and more, and none was able to shut this door which God had opened. All who love the Lord Jesus, will rejoice to hear that he has opened the door of faith to those who before were strangers to him and to his salvation. Finding much work at Antioch, they continued long among the disciples.

Shall not we also cultivate an intercourse with those who know and love the Lord? And, when admitted to their friendship, shall we not embrace the opportunity of declaring or inquiring after the enlargement of the church of Christ? Hath God opened the door of faith to those who were in darkness? Let this be proclaimed with grateful adoration, for, compared with this, how trifling and foolish are the subjects which generally occupy conversation! How grievous is the stupidity of men, who, though eager to hear or relate every idle occurrence, have no desire to be acquainted with the glorious work which God is carrying on by the gospel of his Son!—(60.)

## CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1—6. *The controversy raised by judaizing teachers.*

Some persons from Judea taught the Gentile converts at Antioch, that they could not be saved unless they observed the whole ceremonial law, and thus sought to destroy their christian liberty. There is a strange proneness in us to make our own opinion and practice a rule and a law to every body else; to judge of all about us by our own standard, and to conclude that all do wrong who do not just as we do. It is no wonder if those who have wrong notions of the kingdom of Christ take wrong measures for advancing it, even such as really tend to its destruction, as these do. We ought to be well warranted by the word of God, before we say, Except you do thus, you cannot be saved.

Their doctrine was very discouraging, and a great hinderance to the spread of the gospel; it also promoted false sentiments concerning justification. Paul and Barnabas opposed these perversions, and endeavoured to satisfy the minds of the people; but as this did not suffice, they determined to go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. We find that this was done by revelation, the Lord having made known to them that he would have them do so, Gal. 2. 1—10. Being attended part of the way by members of the church at Antioch, they proceeded, giving a particular account of the conversion of the Gentiles in Asia Minor. They also gave these statements when they arrived at Jerusalem.

Though these things gave general satisfaction, yet some of the pharisees who had embraced the gospel, contended that the converts ought to observe the Jewish rites and ceremonies. It was, therefore, deemed expedient to meet together, and give the important subject full consideration. This assembly is commonly called the first general council; it appears, indeed, to have also been the last where properly it could be said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

Wise and good men will desire to avoid controversy and disputation as far as they can, yet when false teachers oppose the fundamental truths of the gospel or bring in pernicious tenets, controversy must not be declined. It may also be useful for ministers and disciples of Christ to meet together, to consider any controverted

subject. Great humility, temper, prudence, and candour are requisite; yet select companies meeting in the fear of God and in the spirit of humble prayer for Divine teaching, may be very beneficial.

Ver. 7-21. *The council at Jerusalem.*

Peter did not pretend to any primacy. He was a faithful, prudent, zealous member of this assembly, and said what was very much to the purpose, and which would come better from him than from another, because he had first preached the gospel to the Gentiles.

He reminded them that some years before, God had expressly chosen him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, that they might believe in Christ; and that the heart-searching God had borne witness to the truth and acceptableness of their faith by the gift of the Holy Ghost, putting no difference between them and the Jews, having purified their hearts by faith. This refers not only to the sanctification of the soul by the Holy Spirit, but also to the purifying the conscience from the guilt of sin through the blood of Christ. After this, they needed not the ceremonies of the law, which were but types and shadows of more substantial blessings. God had, in this first extraordinary case, decided the question; why should they again put it to the trial, as if they meant to impose a yoke on the Gentile converts? The ceremonial law was a heavy and costly burden even to the inhabitants of the promised land, much more to those of other countries, and it would tend exceedingly to prevent the diffusion of true religion. Peter further urged there could be no need to impose this yoke upon the Gentiles, as the Jewish disciples did not expect to be saved by the law of Moses; but only by faith in Christ, exactly as the Gentile believers.

We see from these words, "purifying their hearts by faith," and the import of the speech of St. Peter, that justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost, are inseparably connected; and that both are the gift of God.—(100.)

We have, indeed, great cause to bless God that we have heard the gospel. May we have that faith which the great Searcher of hearts approves, and attests by the seal of the Holy Spirit. Then our hearts and consciences will be purified from the guilt and pollution of sin, and we shall be freed from the burdensome superstitions and in-

ventions some attempt to impose on the disciples of Christ.

Paul and Barnabas showed by a plain relation of matters of fact, that God owned the preaching of the pure gospel to the Gentiles without the law; therefore to press the law upon them now was to undo what God had done. God had given confirmation to their preaching by miracles, and the conversion of the Gentiles was itself a wonder. In the things of God the best explication of the word of grace, is the account of the operation of the Spirit of grace. Persons who fear God will most readily hear those who can tell what God has done for their souls, or by their means, Ps. 66. 16.

When Paul and Barnabas had ended their narrative, the apostle James closed the conference. He refers to what Peter had said concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, and observes, 1. That the grace of God was the rise of it; it was God that visited the Gentiles; he not only visited and redeemed his people, but visited and redeemed those that were not a people. 2. That the glory of God was the end of it; it was to take out of them a people for his name, who should glorify him, and in whom he would be glorified. Let all the people of God remember that they are dignified in God, that God may be glorified in them. He showed them that though the account given by Peter of the manner in which God had first visited the Gentiles in mercy, might be contrary to their prejudices, yet it accorded with the predictions of the prophets, that the Lord's name should be called upon, or used in connexion with persons of every nation. This the Lord had declared, and as all his works were known to him from the beginning of the world, so he was now accomplishing his plan.

The opinion of James therefore was, that the Gentile converts ought not to be molested about Jewish rites and ceremonies, but that they should abstain from meats which had been offered to idols, and polluted in that abominable worship, so that they might show abhorrence of idolatry. Also that they should be cautioned against fornication, which was not abhorred by the Gentiles as it should be, and even formed a part of some of their rites. They were also counselled to abstain from things strangled, and from eating blood; this was a restriction of a different nature; it was forbidden by the

law of Moses, and probably also was forbidden here, from reverence to the blood of the sacrifices, which being the life of the animal, was an essential part of the atonement, and typical of that of Christ. If the Gentile converts had shown an open disregard to the solemn sacrifices, then still offered, it would needlessly have grieved the Jewish converts, prevented friendly intercourse with their Gentile brethren, and have further prejudiced the unconverted Jews. This seems to have been the cause of the restriction, and as long as the sacrifices continued, we may suppose it was to be observed; but as every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, as there is no such restriction in the apostolic epistles, and as the reason here annexed has long ceased, we may suppose we are left free in this, as in the like matters. We find, from Deut. 14. 21, that it was lawful to sell animals which had died of themselves, and in which consequently was the blood, to strangers, therefore it appears to be a ceremonial, not a moral precept.

Believers will delight in attending the ordinances God hath appointed, as means of grace to their souls, and will count his service perfect freedom, adopting or rejecting mere circumstantial regulations, as they appear to promote edification, or the contrary. But they will place no dependence on these things, inasmuch as we can only be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus, even as these primitive christians were. This is the way of eternal life, the preaching of which God blesses, for the conversion of sinners in every age and nation. Never let us seek to put upon others, by authority, or as necessary to salvation, such things as never could plead the Divine sanction. But let converts be warned to avoid all evils, or appearances of those evils, to which they were formerly addicted, or are likely to be tempted; cautioning them to use their christian liberty with such moderation and prudence, as the good of their brethren, and the success of the gospel require. Thus does this apostle show a spirit of moderation, being careful to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, and contriving, as much as may be, to provoke neither.

30. *Grotius* remarks that the design of this list was to specify from what things, besides known sins, the Gentile christians were to abstain, in order to unite with the Jewish christians without offence. The ancients were accustomed to kill

many animals by strangling, from an idea that it rendered them preferable as food. The blood of animals they mixed with other articles, and thus made several dishes highly esteemed among them. *Doddridge* observes, The reason has now ceased, and the obligation to abstain from these latter things ceases with it. And it is unnecessary to show that though the latter things are now permitted, fornication never can be regarded as lawful by any follower of Christ.

Ver. 22—31. *The letter from the council.*

To authenticate the decision more fully, two persons of note were selected to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and by them letters were sent in the name of the apostles and elders, and brethren. In these they addressed the Gentile converts as brethren, disowning those persons who had gone out from them, urging their own doctrines, and subverting the foundations of the faith and hope of the Gentiles. They declared the commission of those thus sent, to explain and confirm the decision to which they had come. For being warranted to declare themselves directed by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, they were assured that it seemed good unto Him, as well as to them, to impose on the converts no other burden than the things before mentioned, which were necessary, either on their own account, or from present circumstances, and in attending to these they would do well and be accepted of God.

As soon as they came to Antioch, they gathered the multitude together, and delivered the epistle, that they might all know what was forbidden. The people rejoiced for the consolation; 1. That they were confirmed in freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law. It was a comfort to hear that carnal ordinances were no longer imposed on them, which perplexed the conscience, but could not purify or pacify it. 2. That those who troubled their minds were silenced and put to confusion. 3. That the Gentiles were encouraged to receive the gospel, and those who had received it were encouraged to adhere to it. 4. That the peace of the church was restored, and that removed which threatened a division. All this was consolation for which they blessed God. This settled the disputes at Antioch, and rejoiced the hearts of the disciples. The ministry of Judas and Silas, who possessed eminent gifts, also tended greatly to establish them in the faith.

All who possess influence and authority, should use it to support their faithful brethren who are affected by prejudices

against them. Unanimity among ministers and christians gives great weight to their determinations, and what they do with one accord, may often be considered as the mind and work of the Holy Spirit, when their counsels and measures are consonant to scripture, promote peace and unity in the church, and are managed in a spirit of christian love.

Paul and Barnabas, though their work lay chiefly among the Gentiles, yet continued for some time in Antioch, not to take their pleasure, but teaching and preaching the word of God. Antioch being the chief city of Syria, there was great resort of Gentiles thither, from all parts, so that in preaching there, they in effect preached to many nations, and thereby prepared them for the apostles' coming in person.

Many others also were there. Even where many others labour in the word and doctrine, yet there may be opportunity for us; the zeal and usefulness of others should excite us, not lay us asleep.

*Ver. 32—41. The contention between Paul and Barnabas.*

We have seen one unhappy difference among the brethren, of a public nature, brought to a good issue; but here we have a private quarrel between two ministers, no less than Paul and Barnabas, not compromised indeed, yet ending well.

Paul remembered that the work appointed him, was afar off among the Gentiles, therefore he meditated a second expedition among them to do the same work, though to encounter the same difficulties. He proposed this to Barnabas, his old friend and fellow-labourer.

Observe he calls all the christians brethren, and not ministers only; For have we not all one Father? He has a concern for them in every city, even where fewest and poorest, most persecuted and despised. Those who have preached the gospel, should visit the people to whom they have declared it. Faithful ministers cannot but have particular concern for those to whom they have preached the gospel. Let us see how it is with them; Paul would visit them, that he might acquaint himself with their case, and impart unto them such spiritual gifts as were suited to it; that he may rejoice with them if they rejoice, and caution them against security; and may weep with them if they weep, and comfort them under the cross, and may know how to pray for them.

Barnabas would have his nephew John, whose surname was Mark, go with them. Mark was his relation, and he was solicitous for his welfare. We should suspect ourselves of partiality, and guard against this in preferring our relations. Paul opposed it; he did not think Mark worthy of the honour, nor fit for the service, who had departed from them, clandestinely as it should seem, without their knowledge, or wilfully, without their consent, from Pamphylia, ch. 13. 13. Paul thought he should not be thus employed who had betrayed his trust; at least, not till he had been longer tried. See Prov. 25. 19. This disagreement came to such a height, that they parted; neither would yield, therefore there was no remedy but they must part. This is very humbling, and just matter of lamentation, yet very instructive. We see,

1. That the best of men are but men, subject to like passions as we are. Perhaps there were faults on both sides, as usual in such contentions. Paul did not allow Mark's conduct the extenuation it was capable of; but it was the fault of Barnabas that he took his natural affection into consideration, where the interest of Christ's kingdom was concerned. And they were certainly both in fault to let the contention be sharp, and also neither to yield. It was a pity they did not refer the matter to a third person. It was their infirmity, and is recorded for our admonition, not to excuse our own intemperate heats and passions; but to check our censures of others, and moderate them. Christ's example alone is a copy without a blot.

2. We are not to think it strange, if there are differences among wise and good men. Even those who are united to one and the same Jesus, and sanctified by one and the same Spirit, have different opinions, views, and sentiments, in points of prudence. It will be so while we are in this state of darkness and imperfection; we shall never be all of one mind till we come to heaven, where light and love are perfect.

3. That these differences often occasion separations. Paul and Barnabas, who were not separated by the persecutions of the unbelieving Jews, nor the impositions of the believing Jews, were separated by an unhappy disagreement between themselves! O the mischief that the remainders of pride and passion which are found



even in good men, do in the world, do in the church! No wonder the consequences are so fatal where they reign!

It was strange that the sufferings of the apostles, as Phil. 1. 12. but much more strange, that even the quarrels of the apostles should tend to the furtherance of the gospel of Christ; yet so it proved here. God would not permit such things to be, if he knew not how to make them subserve his own purposes. More places are hereby visited; more persons are hereby employed in the ministry of the gospel among the Gentiles; for John Mark is again made use of, against Paul's mind, and seems to have proved useful and successful. Silas also is brought in, and engaged in that noble work.

We may further observe, that the church at Antioch seemed to countenance Paul in what he did. He was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God. Those are happy, especially in times of disagreement and contention, who are enabled to carry themselves so as not to forfeit their interest in the love and prayers of the church. And Paul, though without his old friend and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, yet went on cheerfully in his work. Further observe, ministers are well employed, and ought to be satisfied, when they are made use of in confirming those that believe, as well as in converting those who believe not.

Let us then note the effects of human imperfections in the best of men, that we may watch and pray against all sharpness and obstinacy in contending with our brethren. Also, let us copy the example of the apostles in not suffering any personal differences to take us off from, or to make us negligent or unfaithful in the work to which the Lord hath called us. And let those who have made the furthest advances in the christian life, let every one of us lay this seriously to heart—that the greatest knowledge, the highest spirituality of thoughts and views, will not justify the smallest deviation from christian conduct or christian tempers. Let the younger also be constantly watchful over their tempers. Be assured that many who dwelt at Antioch, who had heard but little of the devotedness and piety of Paul and Barnabas, heard of their dispute and separation; and thus it will be with ourselves. Be constant in prayer, that you may never be led by the

allowance of unholy tempers, to injure the cause you really desire to serve.—(8.)

Paul speaks with esteem and affection both of Barnabas and Mark, in his epistles, written after this event. May all who profess thy name, O loving Saviour, be thoroughly reconciled after any variance, by that love which is not easily provoked, and which soon forgets and buries provocation.—(83.)

## CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1-5. *Paul takes Timothy to be his assistant.*

Timothy had been piously educated, and was acquainted with the scriptures from his youth. As he bore an excellent character among his fellow-christians, and possessed considerable abilities, Paul engaged him as a companion in his labours; but as his father was a Gentile, he deemed it expedient that Timothy should submit to the ordinance of circumcision. The apostle did not consider this as needful for Timothy, but lest the Jews should be prejudiced against his ministry he condescended to their prejudices, that he might not hinder his own usefulness, or that of Timothy, who was of a Jewish mother, though some time before, at Jerusalem, he would not agree to the circumcision of Titus, a Greek by both parents, when it was considered by the Jews as necessary for salvation, Gal. 2. 3.

Well may the church expect eminent service from youthful ministers who set out in the same spirit as Timothy, submitting to some things, though painful and burdensome, with a view to usefulness. When, on the other hand, a determination is formed to submit in nothing, to oblige in nothing, the first elements of the christian temper seem unknown; and there is great reason to believe that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel cannot be successfully taught, but that such instructors will have their reward in the empty applauses they give to themselves, and to each other.—(80.)

Paul went through the cities where he had preached the word of the Lord, to inquire into their state. When they saw the testimony, not only of the apostles and elders, but of the Holy Ghost in them, against imposing the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles; they were established, and no longer wavered about it. The design of this decree being to set aside the ceremonial law, and its carnal

ordinances, they were established in the christian faith, because it set up a spiritual way of serving God, as more suited to the nature both of God and man. Thus the church increased in numbers daily: not a day passed but some or other gave up their names to Christ. And it is a joy to those who heartily wish well to the honour of Christ, and the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, to see such an increase.

1. Jewish women were not considered to be forbidden from marrying with Gentiles.—*Grotius*.

3. *Doddridge* observes, that to judge rightly of Paul's conduct in this affair, we must recollect that he always openly avowed that the Gentiles were free from the yoke of Mosaic ceremonies; and that the Jews were not to expect salvation by them; and he also taught that they were not in conscience obliged to observe them at all, except in cases where the omission would give offence. But, because his enemies represented him as teaching people to despise the law of Moses, and even to blaspheme it, he took some opportunities publicly to show how far he was from condemning it as evil.

Ver. 6—15. *Paul proceeds to Macedonia. The conversion of Lydia.*

Paul, and Silas his colleague, went throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia; and it appears, by the epistle to the latter church, that the judaizing teachers did a great deal of mischief, had prejudiced them against Paul, and had drawn them from the gospel of Christ, for which he there severely reproves them.

They were forbidden at this time to preach the gospel in Proconsular Asia. The removes of ministers, and the dispensing the means of grace by them, are in a particular manner under Divine conduct and direction. They would have gone to Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not; having then extraordinary ways of knowing the mind of God, they were overruled by them. We must now follow Providence: and what we seek to do, if that suffer us not, we ought to acquiesce, and believe it is for the best.

That which is here done with respect to a whole people, is likewise done with respect to particular souls. God does not choose by fancy, but by reasons supremely wise, though the reasons of his preference is a secret, known only to the Spirit who makes it.—(94.)

They passed by Mysia, and came to the city of Troy. It should seem, that at Troas Luke joined Paul, for from thenceforward, for the most part, when he speaks of Paul's journies, he writes, "we went," &c.

Christ would have Paul directed to Macedonia. There was presented either to his eyes or to his mind, a man of Macedonia, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us; that is, "Come and preach the gospel to us; let us have the benefit of thy labours." People greatly need help for their souls, and it is their duty to look out for it, and invite those among them who can help them. And ministers may go on with great cheerfulness and courage in their work, when they perceive Christ calling them, not only to preach the gospel, but to preach it at this time, in this place, to this people.

Paul followed the Divine direction more cheerfully, and with more satisfaction, than he would have followed any contrivance or inclination of his own; now that he knows the mind of God, he is determined, for this was all he wanted. God's calls must be complied with readily; as our obedience must not be disputed, so it must not be deferred.

They landed at Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia; it was a colony; the inhabitants of the city were Romans. It was a good while before any notice was taken of Paul. When they had an opportunity of preaching, it was in an obscure place, and to a mean and small auditory. But it was a place where prayer was wont to be made. They that worshipped the true God, and would not worship idols, met there to pray together, and though they were but few, though, for aught that appears, none but women, yet a solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if by any means it be possible, upon the sabbath-day. If we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, according as our opportunities are. Thither Paul and Silas and Luke went, and sat down, to instruct the congregation; they spake unto the women which resorted thither, and led them to the knowledge of Christ.

Among the hearers of Paul was a woman, named Lydia, a native of Thyatira, but who lived at Philippi, where she dealt in purple, probably purple cloths. Observe, she had an honest calling, which the historian notices to her praise. Though she had a calling to mind, she found time to improve advantages for her soul. The business of our particular callings may be made to consist with the business

of religion. Therefore it will not excuse us from religious exercises, to say; We have a trade to mind; for have we not also a God to serve, and souls to look after? Religion does not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it. The Lord was pleased to open Lydia's heart to attend to and believe the apostle's doctrine. This implies that pride, prejudice, and sin shut out the truths of God, till his grace makes way for their admission into the understanding and affections; and that the Lord alone can open the heart for the reception and belief of his word. It is not enough to be worshippers of God, but we must be believers in Jesus Christ, for there is no coming to God as a Father, but by the Son as Mediator. She was led to profess the gospel, and was baptized, with her household. After this, she besought the apostle and his company to lodge in her house. True faith, and a real profession of the gospel, are always connected with love to Christ's servants. She was extremely pressing and importunate. Paul was unwilling to go, because he was afraid of being burdensome to young converts, and would study to make the gospel of Christ without charge, 1 Cor. 9. 18; Acts 20. 34.

11-14. It would be more correctly translated, "Philippi, a city of the first part of Macedonia, or Macedonia Prima." This is confirmed by ancient medals and inscriptions, which show the accuracy of Luke, even in minute particulars. An inscription among the ruins of Thyatira relates to the dyers of that city. The Lydians were famous for their purple cloths.—From the change of expression in ver. 10, to *we* instead of *they*, it is plain that Luke had now joined Paul and Timothy.

13. A decree of the city of Halicarnassus, preserved by *Josephus*, ordains that the Jews may observe their sabbaths and sacred rites, and build *proseuchae* (small places of worship) by the seaside, according to the custom of their country.

Ver. 16-24. *An evil spirit cast out. Paul and Silas scourged and imprisoned.*

There was at Philippi a female slave who was influenced by an evil spirit to utter doubtful predictions or divinations. Thus she had great fame as a sort of fortune-teller, and brought her owners much gain. Being instigated by the evil spirit, who desired to discredit the ministry and doctrines of the apostles, she followed them, crying aloud that they were the servants of the Most High God, who came to show men the way of salvation. Satan, though the father of lies, will declare the most important truths, when he can thereby serve his purposes.

God has, in the gospel of his Son, plainly showed us the way of salvation; has told us how we may be delivered from the misery to which we have exposed ourselves by sin. But those most likely to receive the apostle's doctrine, were prejudiced against these spirits of divination, therefore would, by this testimony, be prejudiced against the gospel. Much mischief now is done by scandalous and hypocritical preachers of the gospel, who are confounded with the real servants of Christ, by superficial observers.

Paul at length cast out the evil spirit by the power of Christ, and every one soon perceived that the woman could utter no more divinations. This shows that it was really the operation of Satan; had it been a mere human juggler, the command of the apostle could not have prevented it. Her owners being exasperated by the loss of their gains, seized Paul and Silas, and accused them as disturbers of the peace, and teachers of unlawful customs; the multitude, displeased at the loss of their prophethood, joined with them. The magistrates gave way to the popular fury; Paul and Silas were severely scourged, and cast into prison, where the jailer treated them with severity.

Those who do good by drawing men from sin, may expect to be reviled as troublemakers of the city; while they teach men to fear God, to believe in Christ, to forsake sin, and to live godly lives, they will be accused of teaching bad customs, and the vilest malefactors will be treated more favourably. What hard usage have God's servants met with, as in the former days, so in the latter times! Witness the British martyrs.

16. Of the evil nature of the spirit of divination which possessed this pythoness, or votary of Apollo, there is no reason to doubt. There probably was some similarity in her appearance and actions to those of the priestess of Apollo at Delphos. Paul and Luke evidently considered that she was under demoniacal influence, which enabled her to foretell some future events; nor is there cause to suppose her a ventriloquist, or a wilful deceiver. *Townsend* has observed upon the folly of making our present experience the criterion of truth for past times. He adds, "The age in which we live is undoubtedly, for the most part, by God's mercy, delivered from the terrible spectacle of human beings evidently possessed by evil spirits; but evil still exists among us, although in a less avowed and terrible form, and it still but too frequently and too effectually withdraws the heart of man from the service of his Maker." It was not unusual for several persons jointly to be owners of a slave, particularly if exercising any gainful trade or profession. The Jews, by her testimony, might have been led to believe, that the miracles

wrought by the apostles were done by the agency of wicked spirits.

24. The stocks in use among the Romans, were large pieces of wood, which not only loaded the legs of prisoners, but extended them in a very painful manner.

Ver. 25—34. *The conversion of the jailer at Philippi.*

The consolations of God to his suffering servants are neither few nor small. He gives them, in answer to their prayers, songs in the darkest night of tribulation, in the most painful and dreary situation. Thus Paul and Silas, having poured out their hearts in prayer, were filled with Divine consolations, and joyfully sang praises to God, so loudly that the other prisoners heard them.

How much happier are true Christians than their most prosperous enemies! As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time is amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. No trouble, how grievous soever, should indispose us for prayer.

At this time the Lord was pleased to bear testimony to their innocence by an earthquake. The doors of the prison flew open, and the prisoners' bands were loosed. The jailer awoke out of his sleep: he saw the prison doors open, and supposed that the prisoners were fled; and then, what would become of him! He drew his sword, and was going to kill himself, to prevent an ignominious death, to which he was liable; and the strict charge which the magistrates gave him concerning Paul and Silas, made him conclude they would be very severe upon him. The heathen philosophers generally allowed self-murder; but Christianity proves itself to be of God, that it keeps us to the law of our creation, obliges us to be just to our own lives, and teaches us courageously to hold them out against our corruptions.

Paul cried with a loud voice, to make him hear, and to make him heed, saying, Do thyself no harm. All the cautions of the word of God, against sin, and all appearances of it, and approaches to it, have this tendency, "Do thyself no harm." Man, woman, do not ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing but that can hurt thee. Even as to the body, we are cautioned against those sins which do harm to that. God had showed his power in binding the spirits of the prisoners, as much as in loosing their chains.

The conduct of Paul and Silas, with this

extraordinary interposition of God in their favour, was made effectual by the Holy Spirit, at once to convince the jailer that they were servants of the Most High God. Convinced of his guilt in treating them with cruelty and contempt, and of the evil of his former sins, he trembled lest he should immediately be destroyed by Divine vengeance. Yet he seems to have felt hopes of deliverance, perhaps remembering that they came to show men the way of salvation. He fell down before them to beg their pardon for the indignities he had done them, and to beg their advice, as a suppliant. Converting grace changes people's language of and to good people and good ministers; and to all thoroughly convinced of sin, the very feet of those are beautiful, who bring tidings of Christ; yea, though they are disgracefully fastened in the stocks.

How serious his inquiry, What must I do to be saved? 1. His salvation is now his great concern; that lies nearest his heart, which before was furthest from his thoughts. Not, What shall I do to be rich and great? but, What shall I do to be saved? 2. He does not inquire concerning others, what they must do; but concerning himself. It is his own precious soul that he is concerned about. Tell me what I must do, what course must I take? 3. He is convinced that something must be done in order to his salvation; that it is not a thing of course, but a thing about which we must strive and take pains. 4. He is willing to do anything. Sirs, put me into any way; if it be but the right way, and a sure way, I will walk in it. Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will surrender entirely to Jesus Christ, will be glad to have Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. 5. He is desirous to know what he should do. We cannot know it of ourselves, but God has made it known to us by his word, has appointed his ministers to assist us in consulting the scriptures, and has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, to be their Guide in the way of salvation. They did not triumph over him, though he trembled; they gave him the same directions as to others, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an example to ministers, to encourage penitents; not to be hard on any for unkindness done to themselves; but to seek Christ's honour more than their

own. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace, in a few words; Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

1. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must accept of Christ as he is offered to us, and give up ourselves to be ruled and taught and saved by him. This is the only way, and a sure way to salvation. No other way of salvation than by Christ, and no other way of our being saved by Christ than by believing in him; and no danger of coming short, if we take this way; for it is the way which God has appointed, and he is faithful that has promised; it is the gospel which is to be preached to every creature, He that believes shall be saved. 2. Thou shalt be saved; not only rescued from eternal ruin, but brought to eternal life and blessedness. Thou, though a great sinner, though a persecutor, yet thy heinous transgressions shall be all forgiven through Christ; and thy hard, embittered heart shall be softened and sweetened by Christ. 3. Thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Be they ever so many, let them believe in Jesus Christ, and they shall be saved; all are welcome to Christ on the same terms. This faith doubtless included belief of the testimony concerning Jesus as the promised Messiah, and reliance on him alone for salvation. They included his household in this assurance, not that his faith could save them, but his example might lead them to believe in Christ also. With him they would become part of the visible church, and have the benefit of the means of grace for their salvation.

They then taught him and his family more thoroughly the doctrines of the gospel. The Lord so blessed the word that he was immediately softened and humbled. He treated them with kindness and compassion, and, professing faith in Christ, was baptized in his name. Neither he, nor any of his family, desired time to consider whether they should be baptized or not; nor did Paul and Silas desire time to try their sincerity, and to consider whether they should baptize them or not. The Spirit of grace worked such a strong faith in them, as superseded further doubt; and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit, that it was a work of God which was wrought in them; so that there was no occasion to hesitate.

Regarding Paul and Silas with respect

and affection, the jailer brought them into his house, and entertained them at his table. His trembling was turned into joy as he believed in God with all his family, and trusted in the Divine mercy, power, and truth, for protection and salvation. Faith produced joy; those who by faith have given up themselves to God in Christ as theirs, have great reason to rejoice. Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Believing in Christ, is rejoicing in Christ.

How wonderful are the varied methods of God's grace! How unlikely often are the objects of it! Some he leads gently to the knowledge of the truth, others he alarms by tremendous dispensations, and snatches them from destruction. Thus He shows the sovereignty of his grace, and gives occasion for praises and thanksgivings. Whatever men have been, or have done to us, we should seek to prevent them from doing harm to themselves; and whenever sinners inquire what they must do to be saved, they must all be answered in the same way. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," suits the case of every inquirer; none can be saved in any other way; none are shut out from salvation who thus apply for it. We are to instruct men in the objects, the nature and effects of this faith; when sinners are thus converted, they will love and honour those they before despised and hated, and will seek to lessen the sufferings they before desired to increase. When the fruits of faith begin to appear, terrors will be followed by confidence and joy in God.

30. *Bloomfield* shows that the inquiry of the jailer can only mean, "How can I attain eternal salvation?" He knew the apostles professed to show the means, and their commission to do it was now established beyond a doubt.

*A. Clarke* observes that he was assured the prisoners had not escaped before he made this inquiry.

Ver. 35—40. *Paul and Silas released.*

The magistrates were conscious that they had acted towards Paul and Silas in a manner they could not justify, and sent orders in the morning for their release. Paul, though willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, and without any desire to avenge himself, deemed it right to remind these unjust men that they had acted unlawfully, inasmuch as they had beaten them in a disgraceful manner, though Roman citizens and uncondemned. They did not choose to depart under the

imputation of having deserved such a punishment, and therefore required to be dismissed in an honourable manner. To tell them that they had beaten the messengers of Christ, would have had no influence; but to tell them they have abused Roman citizens, put them into a fright; so common is it for people to be more afraid of Cesar's wrath than of Christ's. It was not a point of honour that Paul stood upon, but justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause.

This message alarmed the magistrates, as Roman citizens possessed great privileges; they therefore came to the prison, and besought them to depart. As Paul and his companion did not require any reparation for the injury, they consented, and having visited Lydia and encouraged the other new converts, they left the city. They comforted them, by telling what God had done for them, and how he had owned them in the prison. They encouraged them to keep close to Christ, and to hold fast the profession of their faith, whatever difficulties they might meet with, assuring them, that all would then end well, everlastingly well. Young converts should have much said to comfort them, for the joy of the Lord will be very much their strength.

These particulars are important. They show that although the servants of Christ should suffer persecution peaceably, and forgive injuries readily, yet there may be cases in which it is proper for them to claim the protection of the laws, to promote public justice, the peace of the church, and the credit of their profession. But, when proper concessions are made they should never express personal resentment, nor insist rigidly upon personal reparation. Acting with christian simplicity their enemies will be ashamed, silenced, or conciliated; the Lord will make them more than conquerors in every conflict; instead of being cast down by their sufferings, they will become comforters of their brethren.

37. See note ch. 22. 25.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1-9. *Paul at Thessalonica.*

Paul's two epistles to the Thessalonians give such a character of that church, that we must be interested in the account here given of the first founding of it. Paul went on with his work, notwithstanding the ill usage he had met with at

Philippi. He takes notice of this, 1 Thess. 2. 2. The opposition and persecution he met with, made him the more resolute. He did but pass through Amphipolis and Apollonia; doubtless he was under Divine direction what places he should rest in. He found a synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica. He met them on the sabbath-day, in their place and at their time of meeting. He reasoned with them out of the scriptures. We must take the scriptures for our foundation, and reason out of them and upon them, and against those who, though they pretend zeal for the scriptures, as the Jews did, wrest them to their own destruction. Reason must not be set up in competition with the scripture, but it must be used in explaining and applying the scripture. He continued to do this three sabbath-days successively; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line. The drift and scope of his preaching and arguing, was to prove that Jesus is the Christ. He showed them,

1. That it was necessary the Messiah should suffer, and die, and rise again; the Old Testament prophecies made it necessary. The great objection the Jews made against Jesus being the Messiah, was, his ignominious death and sufferings; the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, because it by no means agreed with the idea of the Messiah they had formed; but Paul made out undeniably that He must needs have suffered for us, because he could not otherwise purchase our redemption for us; and he must needs have risen again, because he could not otherwise apply the redemption to us.

2. That Jesus is the Messiah. This Jesus whom I preach unto you, and call upon you to believe in, is Christ, is the Christ, is the Anointed of the Lord, is He that should come, and you are to look for no other; for God has borne witness to him, both by his word and by his works, by the scriptures and by miracles, and the gift of the Spirit to make both effectual. Gospel ministers should preach Jesus; he must be their principal subject. We are to preach concerning Jesus that he is Christ; therefore we may hope to be saved by him, and are bound to be ruled by him. These are the proper means of bringing men to the obedience of faith, and these labours we may expect to see blessed to souls.

Some of the Jews believed, and they consorted with Paul and Silas. They not only associated with them as friends and companions, but gave up themselves to their direction. Many more of the devout Greeks, and of the chief women, embraced the gospel. These were proselytes of the gate; who, though they did not submit to the law of Moses yet had renounced idolatry and immorality, and worshipped the true God only. And not a few of the chief women of the city, who had a sense of religion, embraced christianity. Particular notice is taken of this for an encouragement to women to employ themselves in the exercises of devotion; for this intimates what influence it may have upon many, besides the advantages of it to their own souls. Of the Gentile idolaters at Thessalonica, also great numbers were converted; for Paul writes to the christians there, as having turned to God from idols, 1 Thess. 1. 9, and that at the first entering in of the apostles among them.

The unbelieving Jews were enraged because the apostles preached to the Gentiles, that they might be saved. How strange it is that men should grudge others the privileges which they will not themselves accept! Raising the lowest and vilest people in the city, they attacked the house where Paul and his company lodged, and dragged the owner with some others before the magistrates, charging them as subverters of established order in every place, and that they avowed there was another king, one Jesus. This accusation much troubled the rulers, as they feared the emperor's displeasure if they neglected such a charge, but at present they only required Jason and the brethren to give security that they would appear if called for.

Sin and Satan have inverted the right order of things, and when the kingdom of God is established in men's hearts, an entire change will take place in their affections, judgment, and conduct. In this respect every christian should desire "to turn the world upside down," and pray that the Lord will employ ministers to do it in every part of the earth. But as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, his subjects will always be ready to obey the commands of earthly powers, unless requiring them to break the laws of their heavenly King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither rulers nor people need

be troubled at the increase of real christians, even though turbulent spirits should make religion the pretext for evil designs. Of such let us beware, from such let us withdraw, that we may show our desire to act rightly in society, while we claim our undoubted right to worship God according to our consciences.

Ver. 10—15. *The noble conduct of the Bereans.*

As it was no longer safe for Paul and Silas to continue at Thessalonica, the christians secretly sent them to Berea, where they, as elsewhere, declared their message, in the synagogue. The Jews in this place proved to be of a more liberal and teachable disposition than those of Thessalonica, for they applied with seriousness to the study of the word which Paul preached unto them; and diligently investigated the subject. They not only heard him preach on the sabbath, but daily searched the scriptures, and compared its predictions with the facts related to them. Many were fully convinced of the truth, and there were several religious proselytes and some of the most honourable women of the city, who, with the Jews, embraced christianity.

The envious Jews of Thessalonica followed them to Berea, and again raised the popular fury against them. Paul was conducted towards the sea-coast. He then proceeded to Athens, and sent for his companions to come to him. A truly noble spirit is far from credulity, bigotry, or infidelity; feeling the need of instruction, it will daily search the scriptures to discover the truth. The doctrine of Christ does not fear a scrutiny; advocates for his cause desire no more than that people will, without prejudice and partiality, examine whether things are so or not. Those who read and receive the scriptures, must search them, John 5. 39, must study them, and take pains in considering them, both that they may not run into error, or remain therein, and that they may not rest in superficial knowledge; but may have intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them. Those are truly noble, and likely to be more and more so, who make the scriptures their oracle, and consult them accordingly. Those who rightly study the scriptures, and meditate therein day and night, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble aims and designs. These are the more noble.

May all the hearers of the gospel become like those of Berea, receiving the word with readiness of mind, and searching the scriptures daily, whether the things preached to them are so. O Lord, pity and pardon those who are not acquainted with thy word; or who will not be at the pains to compare what they hear or read, with this only rule. Keep men from rejecting what is agreeable thereto, how contrary soever it may be to their own prejudices and corrupt passions.—(83.)

14. There is no occasion to suppose that this was a stratagem to mislead as to the direction whither Paul had gone. The nearest port to Berea probably was Pydna, where he might embark for Athens.

Ver. 16—21. *Paul at Athens.*

Athens was then the centre of polite learning, philosophy, and the fine arts; but the spiritual mind can take little pleasure in contemplating the most admired productions of science and art, while the persons concerned about them are enslaved to sin, and given up to impiety. Nor is it only unlettered savages that sit in darkness; places most renowned for civilization and science, too often are deeply ignorant of the things of God and of eternity. None are more childish in superstitions, more impious, or more credulous, than some persons, deemed eminent for learning and ability.

Observe the account here given of Athens—it was wholly given to idolatry; this agrees with the account which the heathen writers give, that there were more idols and sacred feasts in Athens than in all Greece besides.

Paul waited till Silas and Timothy came to him; but in the mean time his spirit was stirred within him. He was filled with concern for the glory of God, which he saw given to idols, and with compassion to the souls of men, whom he saw thus enslaved to Satan, and led captive by him at his will. He discoursed with the Jews, reasoned with them, why, since they expected the Messiah, they would not receive Jesus. There he met with the devout persons, who had forsaken the idol temples, but rested in the Jews' synagogue. He entered into conversation about matters of religion, with all that came in his way. In the market, that is, the forum or public place, he disputed daily, as he had occasion, with those who were heathens, and never came to the Jews' synagogue. The zealous

advocate for the cause of Christ will be ready to plead for it in all companies, as occasion offers. Most took no notice of Paul; but some of the philosophers, whose principles were most directly contrary to christianity, thought him worth making remarks upon. The epicureans indulged in all the pleasures of sense, and placed their happiness in what Christ has taught us, in the first place, to deny ourselves. They were gay, superficial infidels, who ascribed all things to chance, and denied a future state of rewards and punishments. The stoics allowed the existence of a Supreme Being; but supposed themselves bound by irresistible fatality; they pretended to extinguish their feelings and passions, were extremely proud and obstinate, and spoke very obscurely as to a future state; they indulged in the pride of life, to which christianity is directly opposed, as it teaches us to deny, and abase ourselves, and to come off from all confidence in ourselves, that Christ may be all in all.

Some called Paul a babbler, and thought he spoke without any design: What will this babler say? this scatterer of words? They regarded him as an idle, contemptible character, a mere insignificant babbler. Others called him a setter forth of strange gods, and thought he designed to make himself considerable by that means, because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. Paul ever dwelt upon these two points, which are indeed the principal doctrines of christianity—Christ, and a future state; Christ our way, and heaven our end. They looked on this as strange, and very different from the philosophy that had for many ages been taught and professed at Athens; they desired to know more of it but only because it was new and strange. They led him, as one that advanced some speculative doctrines, to the part of their city where a court used to sit which inquired into such matters. If any denied a god, he was liable to the censure of this court; nor might any new god be admitted without their approbation. The character of the people is here given, as seekers of whatever is new. All the Athenians, that is, the natives of the place, and strangers which sojourned there, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. They were inquisitive concerning Paul's doctrine, not because it was good, but



because it was new. They were for telling and hearing some new thing; they were for new schemes and new notions in every thing; they were given to change. If Paul, therefore, could start some newer speculation than what they already had, he would gratify them exceedingly. They meddled in other people's business, and never minded their own. Tatlers are always busy-bodies, 1 Tim. 5. 13. They spend their time in nothing else, and a very uncomfortable account they must needs have to give of their time. Who thus spend it. Time is precious, and we are concerned to employ it well, because eternity depends upon it, but abundance of it is wasted in unprofitable conversation.

If any, in the meekness of wisdom, should venture to start such subjects as Jesus and the resurrection, either in the resorts of business, the courts of justice, the schools of modern philosophers, or even in what is called polite company, what numbers would deride or exclaim, while many opposed to each other, would unite in showing contempt; or probably, if they listened for a moment, it would only be to gratify a vain curiosity! Modern speculators seldom show so much respect to the preachers of the gospel as the Athenians did to St. Paul.

17. In the forums at Athens, Socrates and other philosophers were accustomed to hold their discussions. There, as now in eastern cities, people met for conversation. Opposite the forum Eretria was the portico where the stoics assembled and held disputations.

18. Many suppose that the Athenians considered that Paul, when he spoke of the Anastasis, or resurrection of Christ, meant a goddes so named, but this is doubtful. The mention of gods in the plural may be a general expression, or they may have misunderstood Paul when he mentioned Christ as God. The appellation bestowed on him was very contemptuous, signifying an insignificant babbler.

Ver. 22—31. *Paul preaches at Athens.*

Here we have a sermon to heathens, who worshipped false gods, and were without the true God in the world, and to them the scope of the discourse was different from what the apostle preached to the Jews. In the latter case, his business was to lead his hearers by prophecies and miracles to the knowledge of the Redeemer, and faith in him; in the former, it was to lead them, by the common works of Providence, to the knowledge of the Creator, and worship of Him.

The apostle, being called upon, entered on his subject. He observed, that he perceived they were exceedingly addicted to

the worship of the gods—they were in deed very religious in their way. He spoke in language the least likely to prevent their listening to him. In addressing mankind about their souls we may study their peculiar dispositions and opinions, and combat them on their own principles.

He spoke of an altar he had seen, with the inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." This fact is attested by many writers. Various conjectures have been made on this subject; perhaps, after multiplying their deities to the utmost, some suspected there was another, superior to all, of whom they had no knowledge, and therefore dedicated an altar accordingly. And are there not many at the present day, who are zealous in their devotions, yet the great object of their worship is to them an unknown God?

This inscription suited the apostle for an introduction to his discourse, and he stated that he came to declare this God, of whom they confessed themselves ignorant, while they professed to worship him. Observe what glorious things Paul here says of that God whom he served, and would have them to serve. He was the great Creator of heaven and earth, which neither existed nor were produced by chance or by necessity, as some of their philosophers imagined. And as he was the Lord of heaven and earth he could not be supposed to inhabit temples, as their idols, nor could he want any thing from his creatures, as he was the universal Benefactor, and the Source of every blessing to them all. He had formed the whole human race of one family, that they might dwell upon the earth as brethren; and he had allotted the different ages of the world for the fulfilment of his counsels, and appointed to every one the times of his life, and the place of his habitation. All this was to lead them to seek after God and his favour, though in their present state of ignorance and error, they could but grope after him as men in the dark. Yet the difficulty of finding the true God, did not arise from his distance or unconcern about human affairs; in fact, he was not far from every one of them, they all lived, moved, and existed by his power. This some of their own poets allowed. Men thus being the offspring of God, they could not but see the absurdity of representing him by any form or device of man. God had long borne with man's idolatry, but the times of this

ignorance were now ending, and by his servants he now commanded all men every where to repent of their idolatry. He added, that God had appointed a day when he would summon all the earth to his tribunal, and judge them in righteousness. This God would do by that extraordinary Person whom he now preached unto them, and of this they had the fullest assurance, by his being raised from the dead, of which they had most unquestionable testimony.

Each sect of the philosophers would feel themselves powerfully affected by every thing in the apostle's discourse, which tended to show the emptiness or falsity of their doctrines.—(11.)

If men are ignorant of the scriptures, still we may lead them from self-evident principles, to see their need of a revelation, and the benefits resulting from it; and we may show their need of God's word and Spirit.

22. The tribunal of the Areopagus, here rendered Mars-hill, was so called from the place where it was held. Among other subjects, it took cognizance of matters of religion. No foreign god was to be admitted unless allowed by this court. Dr. E. Clarke describes it as an elevated station on the top of a precipice, from whence the apostle would behold the proudest monuments of Athenian superstition; and says that it is not possible to conceive a situation of greater peril, or more calculated to prove the sincerity of the preacher.

23. In a tract ascribed to an ancient Greek writer, Lucian, there is mention of an altar at Athens bearing the inscription, 'To the unknown God.' Pausanias describes at Athens "an altar of unknown gods." Many inscriptions which remained at Athens till the last century fully confirmed the observation of St. Paul, ver. 22. All antiquity bears testimony to the correctness of St. Paul's description of the Athenian character. Their streets were so encumbered with statues, that a satirist said it was easier at Athens to find a god than a man; and Demosthenes describes the people as loitering in the public places of resort, and inquiring if there were any news. There were places expressly devoted to newsmongers.

28. From this and other passages, Paul appears to have been well versed in the heathen writers, and to have applied with much ability, when contending with the Gentiles. This quotation, "for we his offspring are," is from Aratus, a contemporary of Paul.

30. The universal demand of repentance, declared, in the strongest terms, universal guilt, and confronted the pride of the haughtiest, stolid, and at the same time bore down the idle plea of fatality.—Doddridge.

31. When we read that Christ is the Judge of the world, we understand it of him as the Christ, that is, in his whole person; conceiving that the nature of the case, and the all-wise constitution of the Father, render the attributes of Deity, and the properties of humanity, both to be necessary for this unspeakably momentous function.—J. P. Smith.

Ver. 32—34. *The contemptuous conduct of the Athenians.*

The apostle would have said more, but was prevented by the levity of his conceited audience. Some derided the resurrection as an impossibility, others found the doctrine too serious and practical for their vain and curious minds, and declined hearing more on the subject at that time. The apostle was treated with more outward civility than in some other places; but none more despised his doctrine, or treated it with more indifference. Yet even at Athens, a senator and a woman of rank, with a few others, were brought by Divine grace to attend on the apostles for instruction.

Of all subjects, that which deserves the most attention gains the least. Men profess a design to hear it again; but this time never arrives to numbers, till they have sealed their condemnation. Nor are any more likely to fall into this snare of Satan than self-conceited scholars and sneering sceptics. But those that scorn will have to bear the consequences, and the word will never be useless. Some will be found who cleave to the Lord, and listen to his faithful servants.

Consideration of the judgment to come, and of Christ as our judge, should engage us all to repent of our sins, and turn from them to Him. This is the only way to make the Judge our Friend in that day, which will be a terrible day to all who live and die impenitent; but true believers will then lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. Whatever introduction is used, all discourses must lead to Him, show his authority, salvation, death, and resurrection, and centre in Him.

Observe, that although Paul here addressed persons who could appreciate great eloquence and deep reasoning, yet his discourse was as simple, as unadorned, and as entirely pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his salvation, as when he preached to the women at Lystra, or the jailer at Philippi. Let us examine ourselves whether we know the great Jehovah as a God who is to be seen, known, and approached, only through the Son of his love, who reveals to the weakest and most ignorant that which the worldly learned, however refined and intelligent, never have known—the unsearchable riches of Christ, compared with which all other things are as nothing.—(8.)

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1-6. *Paul at Corinth, with Aquila and Priscilla.*

We do not find Paul persecuted at Athens, nor driven from thence by ill usage; but his reception being cold, and having little prospect of doing good there, he departed. Corinth was remarkable for luxury and licentiousness.

Though Paul was entitled to a maintenance from the churches he had planted, and from the people to whom he preached, yet he worked at his calling. An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. Paul, though a pharisee, and bred at the feet of Gamaliel, yet having in his youth learned to make tents, did not by disuse lose the art.

Lightfoot shows that it was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, though they gave them learning or estates. Rabbi Judah says, "He that teaches not his son a trade, is as if he taught him to be a thief." See how careful Paul was to prevent prejudices, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he maintained himself with his own labour, that he might not make the gospel of Christ burdensome, 2 Cor. 11. 7, &c. 2 Thess. 3. 8, 9. He wrought with his own hands for his subsistence, with Aquila and Priscilla, whom he found to be intelligent in the things of God, and he owns that they had been his helpers in Christ Jesus, Rom. 16. 3. This is an example to seek for those services in which we may have the best help for our souls. Choose to work with those who are likely to be helpers in Christ Jesus. It is good to converse with those that will further us in the knowledge of Christ, and to put ourselves under the influence of such as are resolved that they will serve the Lord. The love of Christ is the best bond of the saints, and the communications of the saints with each other, sweeten labour, contempt, and even persecution.

Concerning this Aquila we are here told, that though a christian, he was banished from Rome because he had been a Jew; and the Gentiles had such confused notions, that they could not distinguish between a Jew and a Christian.

Paul reasoned with the native Jews and the Greek proselytes in the synagogue publicly every sabbath. The apostles propagated the gospel, not by force and violence, not by demanding an im-

plicit consent, but by fair arguing. They gave reasons for what they said, and gave liberty to object, having satisfactory answers ready. He persuaded them—it denotes, 1. The urgency of his preaching; he followed his arguments with affectionate persuasions not to refuse the offer of salvation made them. 2. The good effect of his preaching; he persuaded them, that is, he prevailed with them. Some of them were convinced, and yielded to Christ. He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers came. He was grieved for the obstinacy and unbelief of the Jews; was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the love of Christ constrained him to it, 2 Cor. 5. 14. Being thus pressed, he testified to the Jews with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and what was worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised the fathers, and expected by them.

Most of the Jews persisted in their contradiction to the gospel of Christ, and blasphemed. They would not believe it themselves, and did all they could to keep others from believing it. They blasphemed, spake reproachfully of Christ.

Paul hereupon left them. He had done his part, and was clean from the blood of their souls; he had, like a faithful watchman, given them warning, and thereby had delivered his soul, though he could not prevail to deliver theirs. He shook his raiment to add emphasis to his words. He does not give over his work; though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious. The Jews cannot complain, for they had the first offer. The guests who were first invited will not come, but the provision must not be lost, guests must be had therefore from the highways and the hedges. When some oppose the gospel, we must turn to others. Grief that so many persist in their unbelief should not prevent gratitude for the conversion of some to Christ.

2. *Suetonius* mentions that the emperor had compelled the Jews to depart from Rome on account of continual or frequent tumults, which had been occasioned among them by one Chrestus. Some have thought this the name of a Jew, but *Doddridge*, *Bloomfield*, and others, consider that it means Christus, and that the spread of christianity, which was looked upon as a sect of Judaism, and the consequent disputes between the Jews and the christians, alarmed the wretched emperor Claudius.

3. There is no reason to suppose that Paul's trade was not, literally, that of a tent-maker

Tents formed of leather, or thick cloth, were very commonly used in the east, and for domestic as well as military purposes. It was a point of conscience with the Jews to teach their children some trade, even when they brought them up to the sciences. *Doddridge* well observes upon the importance of reminding young persons "that they may fall into circumstances in which it may be necessary for them to support life by such labours as these, which are vastly preferable to begging."

Ver. 7-11. *Paul continues to preach at Corinth.*

The apostle departed from the synagogue, but it seems that he continued to abide and to work with Aquila and Priscilla. He preached in the house of a converted Gentile. Several of the Jews believed, and among them the ruler of the synagogue; and others were afterwards converted, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles. Some circumstances, however, seem to have discouraged Paul. Our Lord Jesus, therefore, condescended to appear to him in a vision, to assure him of his presence, and that he had much people in that city.

The Lord knows them that are his, yea, and them that shall be his: for it is by his work upon them that they become his, and known unto him are all his works. Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in wicked Corinth Christ had much people. In this He evidently spake of those who were the gift of the Father, and his own purchase, though at that time in an unconverted state. He will gather in his chosen flock from the places where they are scattered. Thus encouraged, the apostle continued at Corinth, and a numerous and flourishing church grew up.

Ver. 12-17. *Paul before Gallio.*

Paul at length was accused by the Jews before the Roman governor. This Gallio was elder brother to the famous Seneca; he is described as a man of great ingenuity and great probity, and a man of good temper. They could not charge Paul with persuading men not to worship God at all, but only to worship God in a way contrary to their law. The Romans allowed the Jews in their provinces the observation of their own law; and what then? Does their toleration include a power of imposition? But the charge was unjust; their own law had in it a promise of a Prophet, whom God would raise up to them, and Him they should hear. Paul persuaded them to believe in this Prophet, who was come.

Thus when people are directed to worship God in Christ, and to worship him

in the Spirit, they are ready to quarrel, as if they were taught to worship him contrary to the law.

Gallio dismisses the cause, and will not take any cognizance of it. Paul was about to show that he did not teach men to worship God contrary to the law; but the judge will not allow them to complain to him of what was not within his jurisdiction; therefore, when they were urgent and pressing to be heard, he drove them from the judgment-seat.

Now, 1. It was right in Gallio that he would not pretend to judge of things he did not understand; that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their own religion, but yet would not let them, under pretence of that, persecute Paul in it. But, 2. It was wrong to speak so slightly of a law and religion which he might have known to be of God, and which he ought to have acquainted himself with. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, and whether the gospel be a Divine revelation, were not questions of words and names, they are questions of vast importance, and in which Gallio was nearly concerned. He speaks as if he boasted of his ignorance of the scriptures, as if it were below him to notice the law of God, or to inquire concerning it.

They took Sosthenes, and beat him before the judgment-seat. Many conjectures there are concerning this matter, because it is uncertain who this Sosthenes was, and who the Greeks were, that abused him. It seems most probable that Sosthenes was a christian, and Paul's particular friend; and that the Greeks who abused him were Hellenist Jews.

Gallio cared for none of these things. If by this is meant that he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable; but if it be meant that he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, his indifference was carried too far, and it gives an ill character of him; the historian appears to blame him because he cared for none of these things. A mixture of philosophical scepticism and political contempt for religious matters, compared with affairs of state, appears to have influenced his conduct. Assuredly those who refuse to use authority in persecuting or imposing doctrines and modes of worship, best understand and perform the duties of their office. Yet indifference to all matters of religion, and to the coun-

cerns of eternity, shows that rulers are merely actuated by indolence or worldly policy. Those who see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no sympathy with them, or concern for them, who do not pity and pray for them, are of the same spirit as Gallio, who cared for none of these things.

Ver. 18—23. *Paul visits Jerusalem.*

While Paul found he laboured not in vain, he continued labouring. When he went, he took leave of the brethren, solemnly, and with much affection, with suitable comforts and counsels, and prayers at parting. He took with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchrea, which was a port where those who went to sea from Corinth took shipping, either Paul or Aquila, for the original does not determine which, had his head shaved, to discharge himself from a vow.

Paul left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus. The Jews at Ephesus were so far from driving Paul away, that they desired him to tarry longer with them, to instruct them in the gospel of Christ. It was a sign that God had not quite cast away his people, but had a remnant among them. Paul consented not; he had business at Jerusalem, which would be best done at the time of the feast; probably it was the passover, which was the most eminent. He intimated his purpose, after this journey, to come and spend some time at Ephesus; being encouraged by their kind invitation to hope that he should do good among them, if God willed. Our times are in God's hand; we purpose, but he disposes; and therefore we must make all our promises with submission to the will of God; not only if providence permit, but if God do not otherwise direct our motions.

Paul's going to salute the church at Jerusalem, intimates that it was a very friendly visit that he made them. It was designed but for a transient interview, yet Paul undertook this long journey for that. God's people are dispersed and scattered; yet it is good to see one another sometimes, that we may confirm mutual love, may the better keep up our spiritual communion with one another at a distance, and may long the more for that heavenly Jerusalem, in which we hope to be together for ever.

He went to Antioch, to refresh himself with the sight and conversation of the ministers there; a very good refreshment

it is to a faithful minister, to have for a while the society of his brethren. Paul's coming to Antioch would bring to remembrance the former days, which would furnish him with matter for fresh thanksgiving. Thence he went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia, where he had preached the gospel, and planted churches. His coming to them, and owning them, greatly strengthened them and their ministers; but that was not all; he preached that to them which strengthened them, which confirmed their faith in Christ, and their resolutions for Christ. Disciples are compassed about with infirmity; ministers must do what they can to strengthen them, by directing them to Christ, and bringing them to live upon Him, whose strength is perfected in their weakness, and who is their Strength.

Let us earnestly seek, in our several places, to promote the cause of Christ, forming such plans as appear to us most proper, but relying on the Lord to accomplish them if he sees good. Alas! how far do we come short of the active zeal, diligence, and patience of the apostle to the Gentiles!

18. It is generally considered that it was Aquila, not Paul, who is here referred to as having shorn his head. The vow does not appear to have been that of the Nazarite, but such as was sometimes taken in consequence of sickness or deliverance from danger, to consecrate and offer up the hair, the shaving of which denoted the fulfilment of the vow.

Ver. 24—28. *Apollos teaches at Ephesus and in Achaia.*

Apollos came to Ephesus: he was born at Alexandria in Egypt of Jewish parents. He was well fitted for public service; he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures of the Old Testament, in the knowledge of which he was, as a Jew, brought up. He had great command of scripture language, and that was the eloquence he was remarkable for. Having an excellent faculty of expounding scripture, he came to Ephesus, for the honour of God and the good of many. He was not only ready in the scriptures, able to quote texts, but he understood the sense and meaning, he knew how to reason out of the scriptures; a convincing, commanding, confirming power went with all his expositions and applications of holy scripture. He was instructed in the way of the Lord; he had some acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ; yet he knew only the baptism of John. He was instructed

in the gospel of Christ, as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further. We cannot but think he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but he was not informed as to the mystery of them.

Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles, he made use of the gifts he had. The dispensation of the Spirit, whatever the measure of it may be, is given to every man to profit withal. And our Saviour, by a parable, designed to teach his ministers, that though they had but one talent, they must not bury that, Matt. 25. 26.

Apollos was a lively, affectionate preacher; fervent in spirit. He was full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of precious souls. Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work; both eloquent and fervent, full both of Divine knowledge and of Divine affections. He was an industrious, laborious preacher; he took pains in his preaching; he did not offer that to God which cost him nothing; he first worked it upon his own heart, and then laboured to impress it on those to whom he preached. Though persons may be, in many things, mistaken or ignorant, the Lord will provide teachers, as well as hearers, and lead them forward in the knowledge of his truth and of his will.

Aquila and Priscilla encouraged his ministry, by attendance upon it. Thus young ministers should be countenanced by grown christians. Finding Apollos defective in knowledge of the truth, they expounded to him the way of God, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, more perfectly. They did not despise him themselves, or disparage him to others; but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John. And having themselves got knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long and intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him. Experienced christians should not despise others, but privately point out truths to their attention; and when such counsel is taken in good part, and popular young men are willing to learn, they make rapid progress in usefulness. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old christians. Apollos, though instructed in the way of the Lord, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, but was willing to have it expounded more perfectly. Those who

know much should covet to know more, and to know better what they do know.

Apollos was disposed to pass into Achaia; his friends gave him a testimonial or letter of recommendation. In this way, among others, the communion of churches was kept up. Though at Ephesus they had great loss in being deprived of his labours, they did not grudge Achaia the benefit.

His success in this service answered his intention and expectation, for believers were greatly edified, and very much confirmed. 1. Those who believe in Christ, it is through grace that they believe; it is not of themselves; it is God's gift to them; it is his work in them. 2. Those who through grace do believe, yet still have need of help. As long as they are here in this world, there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled. 3. Faithful ministers are capable of being many ways helpful to those, who through grace do believe; and it is their business to help them much; when Divine power goes with them they will be helpful.

Unbelievers were greatly mortified; the folly and sophistry of their arguments were discovered. Apollos convinced the Jews, and that publicly, before the people. He did it earnestly, he took pains to do it; his heart was upon it, as one truly desirous both to serve the cause of Christ and to save the souls of men; he did it effectually and to universal satisfaction. The case was so plain, and the arguments so strong on Christ's side, that it was easy to baffle all that the Jews could say against it. He aimed to convince them that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers, He that should come, and they were to look for no other. If the Jews were but convinced of this—that Jesus is Christ, even their own law would teach them to hear him. The business of ministers is to preach Christ. The way he took to convince them, was by the scriptures; thence he fetched his arguments; for the Jews owned the scriptures to be of Divine authority; and it was easy for him, who was mighty in the scriptures, to show from them that Jesus is the Christ. Ministers must be able, not only to preach the truth, but to prove and defend it, with meekness, yet with power; instructing those that oppose themselves: this is real service to the church.

28. "That Jesus is the Christ,"

## CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1-7. *Paul instructs the disciples of John at Ephesus.*

Paul, arriving at Ephesus, found some religious persons, who expressed regard to Jesus as the Messiah. He inquired whether the Holy Spirit, in respect of his miraculous gifts, had been imparted to them. They replied they had not been taught whether there were any Holy Ghost or not; by which they must have meant that they had not been led to expect his miraculous powers, or informed that the gospel was especially the ministration of the Spirit. They knew, as Lightfoot observes, that, according to the tradition of their nation, the Holy Ghost had departed from Israel; and professed that they had never heard of his return. They spake as ready to welcome the notice of it. The gospel-light, like that of the morning, shone more and more, gradually; not only clearer in the discovery of truths not before heard, but further, in discovering them to persons who had not before heard of them.

Paul inquired how they came to be baptized, if they knew nothing of the Holy Ghost; for if they were baptized by any of Christ's ministers, they were instructed concerning the Holy Ghost, and were baptized in his name. They said that they were baptized unto John's baptism. Paul explains to them the true intent and meaning of John's baptism, as principally referring to Jesus Christ. He owns that John's baptism was very good as far as it went: John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance. But he shows them that John never designed that those he baptized should rest there, but told them that they should believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. They thankfully accepted the discovery, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul solemnly prayed to God to give them the gifts of the Holy Ghost, signified by his laying his hands on them. God granted this. The Holy Ghost came upon them in a surprising, overpowering manner, they spake with tongues, and prophesied, as the apostles did, and the first Gentile converts. They had the spirit of prophecy, that they might understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God themselves; and the gift of tongues, that they might preach them to every nation and language. What a wonderful change was here made

on a sudden in these men! those who but just before had not so much as heard that there was any Holy Ghost, were themselves filled with the Holy Ghost; for the Spirit, like the wind, blows where and when he listeth.

Though we do not now expect miraculous powers, yet all who profess to be disciples of Christ, should be called on to examine whether they have received the seal of the Holy Ghost, in his sanctifying influences, to the sincerity of their faith. Many seem not to have heard that there is a Holy Ghost, and many deem all that is spoken concerning his graces and comforts, to be enthusiasm and delusion. Of such it may properly be inquired, "Unto what, then, were ye baptized?" for they evidently know not the meaning of that external sign on which they place such great dependence. But when men are conscientious and teachable, they will receive increasing light. Repentance and its genuine fruits prepare the heart for the comforts and blessings of faith in Christ, and for the witness and earnest of the Holy Spirit.

2. "Whether the Holy Ghost be given." The same words are so translated, John 7. 39.

Ver. 8-12. *Paul teaches at Ephesus.*

The apostle proceeded at Ephesus as he had done at other places, and met with the same opposition from the Jews. Many of them openly speaking evil of the way of salvation by Christ. Paul separated the disciples, and leaving the synagogue, he preached and argued daily in a public school. This he did with such success for two years, that men of all places and descriptions in that part of Asia, heard the word of the Lord. When arguments and persuasions only harden men in unbelief and blasphemy, we must separate ourselves, and all whom we can influence from contagious company. At the same time, Paul was enabled to work extraordinary miracles in confirmation of his doctrine. At Corinth, he wrought many miracles; he writes, 2 Cor. 12. 12, that the signs of his apostleship were among them, in wonders and mighty deeds.

Christ gave his apostles power against unclean spirits and against all manner of sickness, Matt. 10. 1. Accordingly, we find that those to whom Paul sent relief, had it in both these cases; for the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them; both of which were significant of the great design and

blessed effects, of the gospel, to heal spiritual diseases, and to free the souls of men from the power and dominion of Satan. Articles of clothing could not convey virtue from the apostle, but were mere tokens of the almighty power of God.

Thus God was pleased to confirm the teaching of these holy men of old, that if their hearers believed them not, they might believe the works. The object of bestowing such extraordinary power, doubtless was to convince the enemy and blasphemer. We find few instances in scripture of miracles unless for the purpose of establishing some new doctrine, or confirming the authority of some messenger of the Most High. There is, therefore, no analogy between the miracles of the bible, and those modern so-called miracles, which, after careful and solemn investigation, are to be attributed rather to the powerful effects of religious excitement upon warm and ardent temperaments, than to any deviation from those laws which nature has received from nature's God.—(8.)

Ver. 13.—20.\* *The Jewish exorcists disgraced. Some of the Ephesians burn their evil books.*

It was common, especially among the Jews, for persons to profess or to attempt to exorcise evil spirits. The persons here mentioned made a trade of exorcisms. The power of the name of Jesus in the mouth of Paul determined them to adopt this manner in hopes of increasing their gains, but without regard to the authority or doctrines of Christ.

The evil spirit acknowledged the power and authority of Jesus and the efficacy of Paul's faith, but he knew not those men, and would not obey their command. The possessed man, actuated by supernatural fury, attacked and overcame them. This is a warning to all who name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity. The same enemy that overcomes with his temptations, will overcome with his terrors; and their adjuring him in Christ's name to let them alone, will be no security to them. If we resist the devil by faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to resist him by the bare using of Christ's name, or his works, as a spell or charm, he will prevail against us.

This extraordinary fact was soon known at Ephesus, and men became afraid to dishonour the name of the Lord Jesus. Many came and confessed their sins. Those especially who had practised sorcery

and magic, showed the arts they had employed. Where there is true contrition for sin, there will be ingenuous confession of sin to God in every prayer; and to man whom we have offended, when the case requires it. Many also brought their books which related to these wicked and delusive practices, and desirous to express abhorrence of the same, publicly burned these writings, though accounted exceedingly valuable. Ephesus was notorious for the use of these arts. There people furnished themselves with those books. Thus the temptation to return to them again was put away. Had they kept the books by them, there was danger lest they should have had curiosity to look into them, and so be in danger of liking them again, therefore they burnt them. Those who truly repent of sin, will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it, and will do all they can to keep others from falling into it, and fear laying any occasion of sin in the way of others.

This was a mighty triumph of the gospel over men's prejudices, favourite pursuits and love of money. The name of Jesus is indeed magnified when false professors are detected and disgraced, when sinners are brought to confess and forsake their evil deeds, when they renounce ungodly gains in obedience to the gospel, and openly make costly sacrifices to the truth. Surely if the word of God grew mightily, and prevailed among us, multitudes of licentious, infidel, and wicked books would be burned by their possessors. Men would neither read such books themselves, nor keep them to poison the minds of their children, nor sell them to injure the souls of others. Will not these Ephesian converts rise up in judgment against professors, who traffic in such works for the sake of gain, or allow themselves to possess them?

Persons commencing a religious life, often have very peculiar difficulties to cope with, not from the temptations and sins of the profligate and sensualist, but of a more refined, less obvious, and therefore more dangerous nature. Amidst the cold and heart-petrifying studies of philosophy or science, the simple truths of the gospel often become distasteful. Amidst the fictitious sorrows of imaginary beings, the excitements of romance, or the charms of poetry, the joys and sorrows of religion lose their due value and weight. But if we desire to be in earnest



in the great work of salvation, every pursuit and enjoyment must be renounced which interferes with its effects upon the mind, or loosens its hold upon the heart, which must be given up wholly and unreservedly to the blessed and sanctifying influences of the gospel of Christ.—(8.)

15. "Jesus I acknowledge, and Paul I know."  
—*Schol. field.*

19. "Of silver coin," but of what value cannot be determined. It is generally supposed to have been the drachm, or rather less than eightpence of English money. The Ephesian letters or characters are particularly mentioned by ancient writers, and appear to have been used to compose an amulet, the formation and use of which probably were taught in these books.

Ver. 21—31. *The tumult at Ephesus,*

Having spent above two years at Ephesus, Paul designed a visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. He purposed to see how the work of God went on in those places that he might rectify what was amiss, and encourage what was good. Thence he designed to go to Jerusalem, to visit the brethren there, and give an account to them, and from thence, he intended to go to Rome, to see the Christians there, to do them some service, Rom. i. 11. He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, to give notice of the visit he intended, and to get their collection ready for the poor saints at Jerusalem. For the present, he stayed in Asia. At length he met with troubles at Ephesus. A complaint was made against Paul and the other preachers of the gospel, for drawing people from the worship of Diana, and thus spoiling the trade of the silversmiths who made representations of her temple, so small that people might carry them about with them. Those who came from afar to pay their devotions at the temple of Ephesus, bought these little shrines to carry home with them. See how craftsmen make an advantage to themselves of people's superstition and to serve their worldly ends by it!

Demetrius laid it down for a principle, that the art and mystery of making silver shrines for the worshippers of Diana, was necessary to be supported and kept up. It is natural for men to be jealous for that by which they get their wealth; and many have set themselves against the gospel of Christ, because it calls men off from crafts which are unlawful, how much wealth soever is to be gotten by them. He charges Paul that he had dissuaded men from worshipping idols. They are no gods which are made with hands. Could

any truth be more plain and self-evident than this? But there are persons who will stickle for what is most grossly absurd, unreasonable, and false, as this—that those are gods which are made with hands—if it have but worldly interest on its side. He reminds them of the danger their trade was in of going to decay. He pretends much zeal for Diana, and jealousy for her honour.

Great displeasure against the gospel and the preachers of it was excited. The craftsmen were full of wrath when told that their trade and their idol were both in danger. They cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The whole city was full of confusion—the common and natural effect of intemperate zeal for false religion. It throws all into confusion, and men run together, not only not knowing one another's minds, but not knowing their own. They laid hands on some of Paul's companions, and hurried them into the theatre. Paul, when he perceived his friends in distress for his sake, would have entered in unto the people, to sacrifice himself, if there were no other remedy. The disciples suffered him not; the crowd would treat him much worse than Gaius and Aristarchus, looking upon him as the ringleader of the party. And some of the chiefs of Asia did the same. Whether they were converts to the Christian faith, and some such there were even of the priests and governors, or whether only well-wishers to Paul, were not told. Zeal for the honour of Christ, and love to the brethren induce zealous believers to venture into danger. Friends will often be raised up from those who are strangers to vital religion, but have observed their integrity and consistent behaviour.

24. The shrines were models of the temple, or at least of the chapel which contained the statue of Diana. This celebrated temple was one of the wonders of the world. It was 425 feet long, 220 broad, and had 80 columns, each 60 feet in height. The craftsmen also probably executed medals, or large coins, with representations of the temple. The Ephesian Diana appears to have been intended to represent nature.

31. The chiefs of Asia were the Asiarchs, annual magistrates, whose office was to superintend matters concerning religious worship, the public games, &c. In Proconsular Asia they were ten in number.

Ver. 32—41. *The tumult appeased.*

The crowd of Ephesians was in confusion; according as their fancies and passions, and perhaps the reports they

received, led them. The Jews interested themselves in this tumult. Those who are thus careful to distinguish themselves from the servants of Christ now, and are afraid of being taken for them, shall have their doom accordingly in the great day.

Alexander was put forward on behalf of the Jews, as their spokesman. The purpose, doubtless, was to exculpate them from any share in the blame imputed to the christians, that they might not be sacrificed in the destruction which threatened the followers of Christ. This they had reason to fear from their well known hatred of idol worship, and the bitter animosity towards them, which appears from the multitude refusing to hear Alexander, because he was a Jew.—(75.)

This occasioned them to drop the prosecution of Paul's friends, and to turn it into acclamations in honour of their goddness. When they knew that Alexander was a Jew, and, as such, an enemy to the worship of Diana, for the Jews had implaceable hatred to idols and idolatry, whatever he had to say, for Paul or against him, they were resolved not to hear him, and therefore shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." It was said of old, concerning idolaters, that they were mad upon their idols; and here is an instance of it. Diana made the Ephesians great, for the town was enriched by the vast concourse of people from all parts to Diana's temple, therefore they were concerned by all means possible to keep up her reputation.

The town-clerk, or the scribe, secretary, or recorder, with much difficulty, at length stilled the noise, and then made a pacific speech. He insinuated that they needed not to be so loud and strenuous in asserting what nobody denied, or could be ignorant of. Not only that the inhabitants worshipped this goddess, but that the city was intrusted with the worship of Diana, and the care of her temple. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was a very rich and sumptuous structure, but the image of Diana in the temple was had in greater veneration than the temple, for they persuaded the people that it fell down from Jupiter. Some take it thus—Seeing the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter, as we all believe, then what is said against gods made with hands, does not at all affect us. What senseless fables have been implicitly credited by those who will not believe the report of the gos-

pel! He then cautioned them against all violent and tumultuous proceedings. Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. A very good rule this is to be observed at all times, both in private and public affairs, not to be hasty and precipitate in our motions, but to deliberate, and take time to consider; to be calm and composed, and always to keep our passions under check. This word should be ready to us, when we ourselves or those about us are growing disorderly. We ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly; to do nothing in haste, of which we may repent at leisure.

He then removed the odium which had been cast upon Paul and his associates, and tells them they were not the men they were represented to be. What can you prove against them? You cannot charge them with sacrilege, or the taking away of any dedicated thing; they have offered no violence to Diana's temple or the treasures of it; nor are they blasphemers of your goddess; they have not given any opprobrious language to the worshippers of Diana or her temple. Though they are not of your mind, they do not inveigh with any bitterness against you. The apostles levelled all their force against the idol in the heart, by reason and argument, knowing that if they could get that down, the idol in the temple would fall of course. Those who preach against idolatrous churches, have truth on their side, and ought vigorously to maintain it, and press it on men's consciences; but with meekness instructing, not with passion and bad language reproaching those who oppose; for God's truth, as it needs not man's lie, so it needs not man's intemperate heat. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

He refers to the regular methods of the law, which ought always to supersede popular tumult, and in civilized well-governed nations will do so. If the complaint was of a private injury, let them have recourse to the judges and courts of justice, kept publicly at stated times. If Demetrius, and the silversmiths, find themselves aggrieved, or any privilege infringed to which they are legally entitled, let them take a process, the matter shall be fairly tried, and justice done. If the complaint was of a public grievance, relating to the constitution, it must be redressed, not by a confused rabble,

but in a lawful assembly, called by those in authority. He makes them sensible of their danger by this tumult. It is well if we be not complained of at the emperor's court, as a factious and seditious city, for we have nothing to say in excuse; let the matter go no further, for it has gone too far already.

Most people stand in awe of men's judgment more than of the judgment of God. How well it were if we would thus quiet and check our disorderly appetites and passions, by considering the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth!

When the town clerk had showed the ill consequences that might follow, he dismissed the assembly. See how the overruling providence of God preserves the public peace, by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men! Thus the world is kept in some order, and men are restrained from devouring each other. God stills the noise of the sea, and, which is no less an instance of his almighty power, the tumult of the people, Ps. 65. 7. See how many ways God has of protecting his people! Perhaps this town-clerk was no friend to Paul, or the gospel he preached, yet his human prudence is made to serve the Divine purpose.

We can scarcely look around in this world, but we see the part of Demetrius and the workmen acted over again. It is as safe to contend with wild beasts as with men enraged by bigotry and disappointed avarice, who think that all arguments are answered, when they have shown that they grow rich by the practices which are opposed. Whatever side in religious controversies, or whatever name this spirit assumes, it is anti-christian, and should be strenuously discountenanced by all of truth and piety.

Observe, 1. The opposition made to the gospel in past ages has proceeded from the depraved passions of men. Such opposition honours christianity. Had that been a human contrivance, it would have gratified the propensities of the heart, and have made it the interest of the licentious and worldly to embrace it. But christianity is a pure emanation from that holy Being, whom sinners secretly dislike, though they profess to love and venerate Him. It teaches the purest morality. It inculcates active benevolence, and teaches us fidelity in every relation. And it has abolished institutions, which

originated in the cruelty and licentiousness of mankind; it has overthrown establishments under which imposture flourished; it has restrained vices, which were sources of private and public misery. 2. Observe, the sacred name of religion has been misused for infamous purposes of cruelty and corruption. 3. And that truth is not to be decided by numbers. What in most cases is called the voice of the people, is but the voice of a few artful men, who use them as the blind instruments of accomplishing their purposes. 4. But God reigns, and carries on the designs of his government amidst the commotions of the world. Let us not be dismayed; the interests of truth and righteousness are safe under the protecting care of their Almighty Patron. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea, Ps. 93. 4.—(79.)

35. From this verse some expositors have supposed that the image of Diana was formed from an aerolite, or atmospheric stone; but Pliny describes it as having been made from the wood of the vine.—*T. H. Horne*. The word translated "worshipper," signifies devoted, or consecrated to.

## CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1-6. *Paul's journeys.*

Paul had tarried at Ephesus longer than he had done at any one place since he was ordained to the apostleship of the Gentiles; but now he must preach in other cities also. Tumults or opposition may constrain a christian to remove from his station or alter his purpose, but his work and his pleasure will be the same, wherever he goes. He took leave solemnly; he called unto him the disciples, the principal persons of the congregation, and embraced them, according to the usage of the primitive church.

He went first to Macedonia; there he visited Philippi and Thessalonica, and enforced his exhortations with a great variety of motives and arguments. He stayed three months in Greece, and was about to sail into Syria, to Antioch; but he resolved to return through Macedonia, the same way he came, because the Jews had waylaid him.

At Troas he had appointed a general rendezvous. His companions went before, and stayed for him at Troas. Paul made his way thither; and, it should seem, Luke was now in company with him. The persons here named seem to

have been the messengers of the churches, appointed to accompany Paul with their contributions to Jerusalem. The days of unleavened bread are mentioned only to describe the time, not to intimate that Paul kept the passover after the manner of the Jews. Paul thought it worth while to bestow five days in going to Troas, though it was but for an opportunity of seven days' stay there; but he knew, and so should we, how to redeem even journeying time, and to make it turn to some good account.

Ver. 7—12. *Eutychus restored to life.*

The last of the seven days that Paul stayed at Troas, there was a solemn religious assembly of the Christians, according to their constant custom.

1. Though the disciples read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung apart, and thereby kept up their communion with God, yet that is not enough; they must come together to worship God in concert, and so keep up their communion with one another. There ought to be stated times for the disciples of Christ to come together.

2. They came together upon the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day, the Christian sabbath, celebrated in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on the first day of the week, when it was their practice to come together in all the churches. The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ; and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known they are his disciples: and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies.

3. They were gathered together in an upper chamber; they had no temple or synagogue to meet in, no capacious, stately chapel, but met in a private house. It will be no excuse for absenting ourselves from religious assemblies, that the place is not so commodious as we would have it to be.

4. They came together to break bread, that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified. In the primitive times it was the custom to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating the memorial of Christ's death. In

this assembly Paul preached to them. Though they were disciples of Christ already, yet it was very necessary they should have the word of God preached to them in order to their increase in knowledge and grace. Observe, the preaching of the gospel ought to accompany the sacraments. Farewell sermons are usually, in a particular manner, affecting both to the preacher and to the hearers. It was a very long sermon; Paul continued his speech until midnight; for he had a great deal to say, and knew not that ever he should have another opportunity of preaching to them. They were willing to hear, he saw they were so, and therefore continued his speech till midnight.

A young man in the congregation who slept, was killed by a fall from the window, but was raised to life again. This youth was to be blamed that he slept, nay, he fell into a deep sleep when Paul was preaching. The particular notice taken of his sleeping, makes us to hope that none of the rest slept; but this youth was carried away with it, so the word imports; which perhaps intimates, that he strove against it, but was overpowered by it. He fell down from the third floor, and was taken up dead. We must look upon sleeping when hearing the word, as an evil thing, as a sign of low esteem of the word of God, and a great hinderance to profiting by it; we must be afraid of it, do what we can to prevent being sleepy, not compose ourselves to sleep, but get our hearts affected with the word we hear, so as to drive sleep far away. Let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and by it into worse. Let the case of Eutychus strike an awe upon us all. And what shall we say to those, who, in the middle of the day, and during a moderate service, make a practice of sleeping? Infirmary requires tenderness; but such a confirmed habit of contempt requires severity.

It interrupted Paul's preaching; but proved the occasion of a great confirmation to his preaching. Paul fell on the dead body, and embraced it, thereby expressing great compassion to, and affectionate concern for this young man. Such tender spirits as Paul had, are much affected with sad accidents of this kind, and are far from judging and censuring those that fall under them. But this was not all; his falling on him and embracing him, like Elisha, 1 Kings 17. 21,

and Elisha, 2 Kings 4. 34, as a sign represented the descent of that Divine power upon the dead body, for the putting life into it again, which at the same time he inwardly, earnestly, and in faith prayed for.

He assured them Eutychus was returned to life, and it would appear presently. He came up again to the meeting, they broke bread together in a love feast, which usually attended the eucharist, in token of communion with each other, and for the confirmation of friendship among them; they talked a long while, till break of day. Christian conference is an excellent means of promoting holiness, comfort, and christian love. They knew not when they should have Paul's company again, therefore made the best use of it they could, and reckoned a night's sleep well lost for that purpose.

How seldom are hours of repose broken in upon for the purposes of devotion! but how commonly are they broken for mere amusement or sinful revelry! So hard is it for spiritual life to thrive in the heart of man! so naturally do carnal practices flourish there! Let us implore the Lord to pardon the infirmities of his people, to care for their concerns, and to comfort them under tribulations.

Before they parted, they brought the young man alive into the congregation, and they were not a little comforted. It was the matter of great rejoicing among them, not only to the relations of the young man, but to the whole society.

8. *Juvett* describes his residence at Halvali, in Greece, as illustrating this passage, and it is descriptive of the generality of eastern houses. The ground floor was used as a store; the first floor consisted of a humble suite of rooms for daily use. On the upper floor the rooms were large and elegant; the windows in front projected and overhung the street; round the room, and particularly in the windows, was a raised step, or divan, for the more distinguished guests; and when the company was numerous, they placed cushions for a second row of persons. Thus Eutychus would be on a level with the open window, and might easily fall out. He also notices the great plenty of oil in that neighbourhood, which would enable them to have many lamps, and the heat would increase the drowsiness of the youth, and account for the window being open. The words of the evangelist decidedly indicate that Eutychus was killed by the fall.

Ver. 13-16. *Paul journeys towards Jerusalem.*

Paul is hastening towards Jerusalem, but strives to do all the good he can by the way, when going from place to place, as every good man should do. He sent his companions by sea to Assos, but he

himself was minded to go afoot. It is taken notice of by the ancients as a rough way, yet that way Paul would take, that he might do good by the way; or, that he might inure himself to hardship, and not seem to indulge his ease. He aimed to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost; it was a time of concourse, which would give him an opportunity of propagating the gospel among the Jews and proselytes, who came from all parts to worship at the feast. In prosecuting God's work, our own inclinations and those of our friends must often be crossed; we must not spend our time with them when duty calls us another way, or when there is a prospect before us of doing more good.

Ver. 17-27. *Paul's discourse to the elders of Ephesus.*

When Paul came to Miletus, he sent for the elders, or presbyters of Ephesus, that he might instruct and encourage them to go on in their work. He took leave of these elders in a pathetic and practical discourse.

I. He appeals to them concerning his life and doctrine all the time he had been in and about Ephesus, ver. 18. They all knew that he was no designing, self-seeking man; and he gives instructions to those in whose hands the work was now left, to follow his example.

1. His spirit and conversation were excellent and exemplary. He was consistent with himself. He had made it his business to serve the Lord; to promote the honour of God and the interest of Christ and his kingdom among them. He had done his work with all humility of mind, that is, in all works of condescension and self-abasement. Those who would in any office serve the Lord, acceptably to him and profitably to others, must do it with humility of mind. He had always been very tender, affectionate, and compassionate among them. In his praying he wept and made supplication; in his preaching, what he had told them before, he told them again, even weeping, Phil. 3. 18. He had struggled with many difficulties among them. The faithful servants of the Lord continue to serve him in the midst of troubles and perils; they care not what enemies they make, so that they can but approve themselves to their Master, and obtain him as their Friend.

2. His preaching was such as it should be, ver. 20, 21. He came to Ephesus to preach the gospel of Christ, and he had

been faithful both to them and to Him that appointed him. He was a *plain* preacher, one that delivered his message so as to be understood: this is intimated in two words; he did not amuse them with speculations, but showed and taught the plain truths of the gospel. He was a *powerful* preacher; he preached the gospel as a testimony to them if they received it; but as a testimony *against* them if they rejected it. He was a *profitable* preacher; one that in all his preaching aimed at doing good to those to whom he preached; to inform their judgments, and reform their hearts and lives. He was a *painful* preacher, very industrious and indefatigable in his work. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to preach the gospel publicly, nor did he grudge to bestow pains privately, among a few. He was a *faithful* preacher; he preached all that he thought profitable. He did not keep back reproofs when necessary, for fear of offending; nor keep back the preaching of the cross, though he knew it was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. He was a *catholic* preacher; he testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. Ministers must preach the gospel with impartiality; for they are ministers of Christ for the universal church. He was a truly *christian, evangelical* preacher; he did not preach notions or matters of doubtful disputation, nor intermeddle with affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached faith and repentance, the two great gospel graces. He preached repentance as God's great command, which we must obey; and he preached it as Christ's gift, in order to the remission of sins. And faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. We must have true faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, consenting to him as our Lord and our God. For there is no coming to God, as penitent prodigals to a father, but in the strength and righteousness of Jesus Christ as Mediator.

Such a preacher as this they all knew Paul had been; and if they would carry on the same work, they must walk in the same spirit, in the same steps. A better summary of the essentials, without which there is no salvation, cannot be given than this of the apostle: even repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, with their genuine fruits and effects. Without these no sinner can escape destruction, and with these none will come short of eternal life.

II. He declares his expectations of sufferings and afflictions in his present journey to Jerusalem. Let them not think that he quitted Asia for fear of persecution; he was now hastening where the battle was likely to be hottest. Though not yet bound in body, he was bound in spirit; he was in full expectation of trouble, yet firmly resolved to proceed, well assured that it was by Divine direction.

1. He does not know particularly the things that shall befall him at Jerusalem. It is good for us to be kept in the dark concerning future events, that we may refer ourselves to God; let him do with us as seemeth good in his eyes.

Thanks be to God that we know not the things which shall befall us during the year, the week, the day which has begun—that our heavenly Father has in mercy drawn a curtain which mortal eye can never penetrate, between the feelings of the present hour, and the painful realities of the future. It is enough for the child of God to know that his strength shall be equal to his day. He knows not—he would not know—what the day before him shall bring forth.—(8.)

2. Yet Paul knows that there is a storm before him; for besides the common notice given to all christians and ministers, to expect and prepare for sufferings, he had particular intimations of extraordinary trouble now before him.

3. He was enabled to go on with his work, and to look with gracious and generous contempt upon the difficulties and discouragements he met with in it. The powerful influences of the Holy Spirit bind the true christian to his duty, in a manner perfectly consistent with the greatest liberty. Even when he expects persecution and affliction, the love of Christ constrains him to proceed. Paul is here an example of holy courage and resolution. He did not lay these things to heart, Christ and heaven lay there. None of these things moved him. They did not drive him off from his work; they did not deprive him of his comfort. Life is naturally dear to us, but all that a man has, and life too, will he give, who understands himself aright, and his own interest, rather than lose the favour of God, and hazard eternal life. Paul was of this mind. He is willing to spend his life in labour, to hazard his life in dangerous services, to lay down his life in martyrdom, so that he may answer the great intentions of his

birth, his baptism, and his ordination to the apostleship.

Two things this great and good man is in care about, and if he gain them, it is no matter to him what becomes of life.

*First.* That he may be found faithful to the trust reposed in him; that he may finish the ministry he has received of the Lord Jesus. Christ put them into the ministry; it is he that carries them on in their ministry; from him they have strength to do their service, and bear up under its hardships. Paul made it the business of his life, desired not to live a day longer than he might be instrumental to spread the knowledge and savour and power of the gospel. *Second.* That he may finish well; he cares not when the period of his life comes, nor how, be it ever so soon, ever so sudden, ever so sad, as to outward circumstances, so that he may but finish his course with joy. We must look upon it as the business of our life, to provide for a joyful death; that we may not only die safely, but die comfortably.

III. Counting that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals concerning his integrity. 1. He tells them, that he was now taking his last leave of them. We ought often to think, that those who now are preaching to us the kingdom of God will shortly be removed. Yet a little while is their light with us; it concerns us therefore to improve it while we have it, that we may hope to look them in the face with comfort in the great day. 2. He appeals to them concerning the faithful discharge of his ministry among them. I am pure from the blood of all men, the blood of souls. This plainly refers to Ezek. 33. 6. He leaves the blood of them that perish upon their own heads, because they had fair warning given, but they would not take it. He charges these ministers to look to it that they took care and pains, as he had done. 3. He proves his own fidelity with this; For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. He had not added any inventions of his own. He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel pure, so he had preached it to them entire; that, having the truths of the gospel opened to them from first to last, they might the better understand them. He had not shunned preaching those doctrines which he knew would be provoking to the watchful enemies of christianity, or displeasing

to the careless professors of it, but faithfully did his work whether they would bear or forbear. And thus it was that he kept himself pure from the blood of all men.

24. Finish the short race of human life with honour and applause—it is a beautiful and striking allusion to the races in the ancient games.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 28—38. *Paul's discourse to the elders of Ephesus, and their farewell.*

Here is the conclusion of Paul's discourse.

IV. Paul charges them as ministers to be diligent and faithful in their work. To these elders or presbyters, the apostle, upon the actual foresight of his own final leaving them, commits the government of this church, and tells them that not he, but the Holy Ghost, had made them overseers, bishops of the flock. They took not this honour to themselves, nor was it conferred upon them by any prince or potentate, but the Holy Ghost in them qualified them for, and enriched them to this great undertaking. The Holy Ghost also directed those who made the choice, and called, and ordained them to this work in answer to prayer.

He commanded them to mind the work to which they were called. If the Holy Ghost has made them overseers of the flock, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust. They must take heed to themselves in the first place, must have a very jealous eye upon their own souls, and upon all they said and did.

Take heed to the flock. Ministers must not only take heed to their own souls, but must have constant regard to the souls of those under their charge. Take heed to all the flock, that none of them be missing or lost through your neglect. They must feed the church of God, must do all the parts of the shepherd's office, and must see that nothing is wanting which is necessary, in order to their being nourished up to eternal life. There is need of pastors, not only to gather the church of God, but to feed it. They must be awake and watchful; must not give way to spiritual sloth and slumber, but must closely attend to their business.

Let them consider their Master's interest, and his concern for the flock committed to their charge. It is the church He has purchased with his own blood; it is his own; you are but his servants to take care of it for him. From him you received the trust, and to him you must

give up your account, and therefore take heed to yourselves. He has purchased it; the world is God's by right of creation, but the church is his by right of redemption, it ought to be dear to us, for it cost him dear. The church of God is what he has purchased with his own blood. This proves that Christ is God; for he is called so here, where yet he is said to purchase the church with his own blood. The blood was his as Man, yet so close is the union between the Divine and human nature, that it is here called the blood of God, for it was the blood of him who is God; and his being so, put such dignity and worth into it, as to ransom us from all evil, and purchase us all good, nay a purchase of us to Christ, to be to him a peculiar people. Did Christ lay down his life to purchase his church, and shall his ministers be wanting in care and pains to feed it? This gave infinite value to his sacrifice, and suggests to his ministers the most powerful motives to faithfulness, diligence, patience, and fortitude, in their work.

Let them consider the danger of the flock being made a prey to adversaries. Take heed to the flock, for wolves are abroad, that seek to devour. Some understand it of persecutors; it is rather to be understood of seducers and false teachers. Also take heed to yourselves, for some shepherds will apostatize; "Also of your own selves; among the members, nay, perhaps among the ministers of your own church, shall men arise, speaking things contrary to the right rule of the gospel, and destructive of the great intentions of it; nay, they will pervert some sayings of the gospel, wresting them, to patronize their errors," 2 Pet. 3. 16.

Let them consider the great pains Paul had taken in planting this church. He warned every one; besides the public warnings, he applied to particular persons, as he saw their cases called for it. He was constant in giving warning; he warned night and day, his time was filled up with his work. He spake about their souls with affection and concern. He warned with tears, showing how much he was affected with their misery and danger in a sinful state and way, that he might affect them with it. Thus Paul had begun the good work at Ephesus, thus free had he been of his pains; why then should they spare their pains in carrying it on? Having endeavoured to impress them with a deep sense of the importance of the work,

the apostle concluded by commending them to God, calling on them to rely wholly on his guidance, assistance, protection, and blessing.

V. They were in care, what would become of them? Paul directs them to look up to God with faith; and beseeches God to look down on them with favour. He commends them to God, that is, to the protection and care of his providence. It is enough that whomsoever we are separated from, still we have God nigh unto us, 1 Pet. 4. 19. He commits them to the word of his grace, by which some understand Christ; he is the Word, John 1. 1, the Word of life, because life is treasured up for us in him. It is much the same, if by the word of his grace we understand the gospel of Christ. He commends them to the word of God's grace, not only as the foundation of their hope, and the fountain of their joy, but as the rule of their walking.

Observe the precepts of this word, and then live upon the promises of it. He commends them to the word of God's grace, not so much for protection or provision, as for the spiritual blessings they most needed, and ought most to value. They had received, and were intrusted to preach the gospel of the grace of God. He recommends them to that, for their edification; "It is able, the Spirit of grace working with it and by it, to build you up, and you may depend upon that while you keep close to it." Ministers, in preaching the word of grace, must aim at their own edification. The most advanced christians are capable of growing, and will find the word of grace to have more and more in it to contribute to their growth; it is still able to build them up. Also for their glorification: it is able to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Heaven is an inheritance, sure to all the seed. This inheritance is secured to all those, and those only, that are sanctified; for as those cannot be welcome guests to the holy God, or to the holy society above, who are unsanctified, so really heaven would be no heaven to them; but to all that are sanctified, that are born again, and on whom the image of God is renewed, it is as sure as almighty power and eternal truth can make it.

VI. He recommends himself to them as an example of indifference to this world, and every thing in it, which they would find contribute greatly to their easy and comfortable passage through it.



1. That he never aimed at worldly wealth. The false apostles desired to make a fair show in the flesh, Gal. 6. 12, to make a figure in the world; but Paul did not do so; he knew how to want, and how to be abased. He was not greedy to receive from them, either silver, or gold, or apparel; so far from being always craving, he was content with such things as he had.

2. That he had worked for his living; Observe, Paul was sometimes reduced to necessities. What an unthinking, unkind, ungrateful world is this, that could let such a man as Paul be poor in it! He desired no more than to have his necessities supplied; he did not work at his calling to enrich himself, but to maintain himself with food and raiment. When he was to earn his bread, he did it by a manual occupation. Paul reminds these presbyters, and others, by them, of this, that the less encouragement they have from men, the more they shall have from God.

3. That even when he worked for the supply of his own necessities, he spared something for the relief of others, ver. 35. In all parts of your duty I have given a good example, particularly in this, that, so labouring, you ought to support the weak. Some understand it of helping to support the sick and the poor, because it agrees with Paul's exhortation, Eph. 4, 28. Let him labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth. This might seem a hard saying, therefore Paul backs it with a saying of their Master's, which he would have them always remember; it should seem, they were words he often used to his disciples; It is more blessed to give than to receive.

It is, saith Tillotson, a particular endearment of this admirable saying of our Saviour's to us; that, being omitted by the evangelists, and in danger of being lost and forgotten, it was thus retrieved by St. Paul, and recorded by St. Luke. The sentiment of the children of this world, is contrary to this; they are afraid of giving, but in hope of getting. Clear gain is with them the most blessed thing that can be; but Christ tells us, It is more blessed, more excellent in itself, an evidence of a more excellent disposition of mind, and the way to better blessedness at last, to give than to receive. It makes us more like to God, who gives to all, and receives from none; and to the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good. This mind was in Christ

Jesus, may it be in us also! With this example, instruction, and admonition to labours, to disinterestedness, and to liberality, the apostle closed his address to the elders, and his words could not but make a deep and lasting impression on their minds.

Paul and the elders of Ephesus parted with prayer; no doubt suited to the present mournful occasion. He committed them to God in his prayer; prayed that He would not leave them. He had committed the care of the church at Ephesus to those elders; now he prays that God would enable them faithfully to discharge the great trust reposed in them. He prayed that the great Shepherd of the sheep would take care of them all. Thus he taught ministers to pray for those they preach to, that they may not labour in vain.

It was a parting prayer. It is good for friends, when they part, to part with prayer. Paul here followed the example of Christ, who, when he took leave of his disciples, after he had preached to them, prayed with them all, John 17. 1. They parted with tears and affectionate embraces. They all wept sore. Paul, who was most affectionate himself, had friends who were very affectionate to him. What cut them to the heart was the word Paul spake, that he was certain they should see his face no more. When our friends are separated from us by death, this consideration raises up our mourning, that we shall see their faces no more; but we complain not of this as those that have no hope; for if our friends died in Christ, and we live to him, they are gone to see God's face, to behold his glory, with the reflection of which their faces shine, and we hope to be with them shortly. Though we shall see their faces no more in this world, we hope to see them again in a better world, and to be there together for ever, and with the Lord. Those who exhort, and pray for one another, may have many weeping seasons, and painful separations, but they will meet before the throne of God, to part no more. May the Lord supply his church with bishops, presbyters, pastors, who drink deep into this spirit, who closely follow the steps of this blessed apostle, and the Ephesian overseers of that flock which He purchased with his own blood.

They accompanied him to the ship; if it must be the last interview, they will

see the last of him. It was a comfort to all, that the presence of Christ both went with him, and stayed with them.

There is a point at which our dearest bonds must be broken, our closest relationships dissolved. We may travel together long, profitably, and peacefully; but it cannot be for ever. Both may go to the water's edge together; but each must enter it singly and alone. Would you so part that you may be reunited, that when the flood of death is crossed, you may meet again in the celestial city? It is now within your power,—the offer, the hope, the certainty, are all within your reach. If you are indeed the children of the same Saviour, the possessors of the same hope, your feeling may rightly be, Blessed be God, we shall see their face again. The Lord himself, when all other friends must leave you at the brink, will descend with you into the troubled waves; will still them with His voice, bear you up in His arms, amidst all the swellings of Jordan, and never leave you nor forsake you, but carry you once again into the company of those you loved on earth, and from whom you shall not be separated, throughout all eternity.—(8.)

28. Much having been said and written respecting the different readings of this verse, it appears desirable to state that there are six verbal variations with respect to it. It stands thus: The church, 1. Of God; 2. Of Christ; 3. Of the Lord God; 4. Of the God and Lord; 5. Of the Lord and God; 6. Of the Lord. Of these, 2, 3, and 4 are almost without support; 5 is a combination of 1 and 6, between which the question seems to be. *J. P. Smith* thinks that the preponderance of evidence is for reading, "The church of the Lord." This is the reading of the most ancient manuscripts, and is admitted by Griesbach into the text. *Bloomfield* considers that "The church of God" is the true reading, and observes that it is a usual expression of St. Paul, since it occurs eleven times in the epistles. Whichever is correct, the text supports the divinity of Christ, since, as *J. P. Smith* observes, the appellation, "the Lord," given to the Redeemer, is combined with a peculiar and exalted knowledge, authority, power, and influence, for the advancement of his kingdom, and the protection of his servants.

35. This saying is not recorded in the gospels, hence it is concluded that Paul had learned it from those who heard it from our Lord.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1—7. *Paul's voyage towards Jerusalem.*

Paul found it hard to get clear from Ephesus. The words literally mean, Having torn ourselves from them; and denote the affection which united the hearts of these christian friends, and ren-

dered it so painful for them to part. From thence they had a prosperous voyage. Providence must be acknowledged when we are favoured by circumstances to the expediting of our affairs.

At Tyre, Paul found disciples, some that had embraced the gospel, and professed the christian faith. Wherever Paul came, he inquired what disciples were there, found them out, and associated with them. They urging him to stay with them as long as he could, he remained seven days. The disciples at Tyre were endowed with such gifts, that they could, by the Spirit, foretell the troubles Paul would meet with at Jerusalem. God saw fit to have it much prophesied of before, that people's faith, instead of being offended, might be confirmed thereby. Foreseeing his troubles, out of love to him, and concern for the church, they begged that he would not go up to Jerusalem, for they hoped the decree was conditional, as the prediction to David, that the men of Keilah would deliver him up. They advised he should not go up, because they concluded it would be most for the glory of God that he should continue at liberty; but his trial would be for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the gospel; the importunity used to dissuade him from it, renders his pious resolution the more illustrious.

The disciples at Tyre showed very great respect to Paul. We must testify our love and respect to all faithful ministers of Christ, both for his sake, and for their work's sake among others. Our children also should be admitted to such scenes of earnest devotion, that their minds may be early impressed with the excellency and importance of religion.

They parted with prayer. Thus Paul has taught us by example, as well as rule, to pray always, to pray without ceasing. They kneeled down, and prayed upon the shore, that their last farewell might be sanctified and sweetened with prayer. Those who are going to sea, should, when they quit the shore, commit themselves to God by prayer, and put themselves under his protection, believing to find firm footing for their faith in the providence and promise of God.

They parted at last. Paul left his blessing behind him with those that returned home, and those who stayed sent their prayers after those who went to sea.

At Ptolemais, Paul desired to go ashore to salute the brethren, to inquire of their state, and to testify his good will to them; and he abode with them one day; perhaps it was a Lord's day.

4. The Divine revelation was not a prohibition to Paul's going to Jerusalem, but that trials and sufferings awaited him there.

Ver. 8—14. *Paul at Cesarea. The prophecy of Agabus.*

At Cesarea, they were entertained by Philip the evangelist, whom we left at Cesarea many years ago, after he had baptized the eunuch, ch. 8. 40. He had four daughters, who, it intimates, prophesied of Paul's troubles at Jerusalem, as others had done. There was also a plain and full prediction of the sufferings of Paul, by a noted prophet, Agabus. It should seem as if Agabus came on purpose to Cesarea, to meet Paul with this prophetic intelligence. He foretold Paul's bonds at Jerusalem by a sign, as the prophets of old; and by an explanation of the sign. Thus saith the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of prophecy, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, as the Jews in other places had endeavoured to do, by accusing him to the Roman governors. Paul had this express warning given of his troubles, that when they came, they might be no surprise or terror to him. The general notice given us, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God, should be of the same use to us.

His friends dissuaded him from going forward to Jerusalem. Here appeared commendable affection to Paul. Good men who are very active, sometimes need to be dissuaded from over-working themselves; and good men who are very bold, need to be dissuaded from exposing themselves too far. Yet there was a mixture of infirmity, especially in those of Paul's company, who knew he undertook this journey by Divine direction, and had seen with what resolution he had before broken through the like opposition. He reproved them for dissuading him. Their weeping was a temptation to him; it began to weaken and slacken his resolution. Has not our Master told us to take up our cross? It was a trouble to him, that they should so earnestly press him to that in which he could not gratify them without wounding his conscience. Paul

was of a very tender spirit; he had a compassionate regard to the tears of his friends. He repeated his resolution to go forward. The path of duty will eventually be that of safety. He said, I am ready not only to be bound, but, if the will of God be so, to die at Jerusalem; not only to lose my liberty, but to lose my life. It is our wisdom to think of the worst that may befall us, and to prepare accordingly. What made him willing to suffer and die? It is for the name of the Lord Jesus. All that a man has will he give for his life; but life itself will Paul give for the service and honour of Christ.

His friends submitted, saying, The will of the Lord be done; as it is a rule to our prayers and to our practice, so it is to our patience. When we see trouble coming, it becomes us to say, The will of the Lord be done. God is wise, and knows how to make all work for good. Not only, The will of the Lord *must* be done, and there is no remedy; but, *Let* the will of the Lord be done, for his will is his wisdom, and he doeth all according to the counsel of it. Let him therefore do with us and ours as seemeth good in his eyes. When a trouble is come, this must allay our griefs, that the will of the Lord *is* done; when we see it coming, this must silence our fears, that the will of the Lord *shall* be done; to which say, Amen, let it be done.

Ver. 15—26. *Paul at Jerusalem. He is persuaded to join in ceremonial observances.*

Paul and the company that went with him took up their carriages, that is their baggage, and, as it should seem, like poor travellers, were their own porters. Certain of the disciples of Cesarea went along with them; and they brought with them, or brought them to a christian brother who had a house of his own at Jerusalem, and would gladly entertain Paul and his company. Such a great concourse of people there was to the feast, that it was hard to get lodgings. Mnason received Paul and his company, though he had heard what trouble Paul was likely to come into, which might bring those that entertained him into trouble also. It seems he had been long a christian, and was now in years. It is honourable to be an old disciple of Jesus Christ, to have been enabled by the grace of God to continue long in a course of duty, steadfast in the faith, growing more and more experienced to a good old age.

And with these old disciples one would choose to lodge; for the multitude of their years shall teach wisdom.

Many brethren at Jerusalem received Paul gladly. We think, perhaps, that if we had Paul among us, we should gladly receive him; but it is a question whether we should or no, if having his doctrine, we do not gladly receive that.

James and the elders or presbyters, the ordinary pastors of the church, both to preach and govern, were present. Paul saluted them, that is, he wished them all health and happiness, and prayed to God to bless them. And such mutual salutations, or good wishes, very well become christians, in token of their love to each other, and joint regard to God. He gave them a narrative of the success of the gospel in those countries where he had been employed. He declared it particularly, that the grace of God might appear the more illustrious in the circumstances of his success. Paul ascribed it all to God, and to God they gave the praise of it. They did not break out into high encomiums of Paul, but they gave glory to the grace of God, which was extended to the Gentiles. The conversion of sinners ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, as it is of the angels. God had honoured Paul more than any of them, yet they do not envy him, nor are jealous of his growing reputation, but on the contrary, glorified the Lord. They could not do more to encourage Paul to go on cheerfully in his work, than to glorify God for his success.

James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, request Paul to gratify the believing Jews, by showing some compliance with the ceremonial law, and appearing publicly in the temple to offer sacrifice; which was not become unlawful as yet to those that had been bred up in the observation of it, but were far from expecting justification by it. Not being sinful, they thought it was prudent in Paul to conform thus far. This was great weakness, and a mistake to be so fond of the shadows when the substance was come; to keep their necks under a yoke of bondage, when Christ was come to make them free. But see the power of education and long usage. They gave him to understand that the Jews, who were so zealous for the law, were ill-affected to him. It was true that Paul preached it was impossible to be justified

by the law of Moses; therefore we are not bound any longer to the observation of the ceremonial law. But it was false that he taught them to forsake Moses; for the religion he preached tended not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He preached Christ, the End of the law for righteousness, and repentance and faith, in the exercise of which we are to make great use of the law. The Jews among the Gentiles, whom Paul taught, were so far from forsaking Moses, that they never understood him better than when they were taught to use him as a schoolmaster to Christ. But even the believing Jews, having got this notion of Paul, were prejudiced against him. They could not distinguish Paul's doctrine, therefore condemned it through ignorance.

The weakness and evil of the human heart strongly appear when we consider how many, even of the disciples of Christ, had not a due regard to the most eminent minister that ever lived! Not all the excellencies of his character, nor the signal success with which God had blessed his labours, could conciliate their esteem and affection, seeing that he did not render the same respect as themselves to what they considered of paramount importance, though mere ceremonial observances. How watchful should we be against prejudices, and the misrepresentations from which they originate!

They produce an opportunity which Paul might take to clear himself; We have four men, Jews, which believe, of our own churches, and they have a vow on them, for a certain time; their time is now expired to offer their offering according to the law. Purify thyself with them according to the law; and be willing not only to join with them, but to be at the charges with them. This was not unusual for the richer men to do for the poor; and they think it will effectually stop the mouth of calumny. But they knew how jealous Paul was for the liberty of the converted Gentiles, and therefore expressly covenant to abide by that.

Paul contributed to the offerings of these Nazarites; and agreed to attend at the temple with fastings and prayers for seven days.

Some have blamed this as indulging the Jews in adherence to the ceremonial law, and as discouraging those who stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. We should remember,

that though the apostles were preserved from mistaking or corrupting the doctrines they were intrusted to communicate to the church, they were not infallible as to their personal conduct in many things; it is evident, and they acknowledged that they were to blame. It would, probably, be found difficult to defend the apostle from the charge of temporizing or accommodating too much in this matter. When accommodation interferes with simplicity and godly sincerity, it seldom produces good effects. It is vain to attempt conciliating the favour of graceless zealots, or furious bigots to a party.

This compliance of Paul sped ill to him, for the very thing by which he hoped to pacify the Jews, provoked them, and brought him into trouble. Yet Paul might do well, and nevertheless suffer for it, but perhaps the wise God overruled both their advice and Paul's compliance with it, to serve a better purpose than was intended. It showed that it was in vain to think of pleasing men who would be pleased with nothing but the rooting out of christianity. Integrity and uprightness will be more likely to preserve us than insincere compliances. And when we consider what great trouble it must have been to James and the brethren to reflect that they had by their advice brought Paul into trouble, it should warn us not to press men to oblige us by doing what is contrary to their own judgment.

15. "We put up our baggage."—*Scholefield*.

19. *Paley* shows that this reception of the apostle at Jerusalem is what it might be expected the author of the epistle to the Romans would have met with, especially as we may conclude that his preaching would resemble his writing.

20. The number of Jews who, nominally at least, embraced christianity, during the earlier part of the apostolic ministry, was very considerable. They are here stated as having been many myriads; the term is used to signify a countless multitude.

24. It was not unusual among the Jews to defray the expenses of Nazarites in sacrificing on their being released from their vow. It was regarded as a proof of piety, and did not necessarily constitute the person a Nazarite; see *Witsius*. The signifying the accomplishment, was giving notice to the priests of the period of the completion of the days of purification, which the persons themselves appear not to have been able to do, because they could not provide the sacrifices.—*Bloomfield*. The charges of four Nazarites would be the price of eight lambs and four rams, also oil, flour, and other smaller articles.

Ver. 27—40. *Paul, endangered by a tumult of the Jews, is rescued by the Romans.*

Paul was seized in the temple, when attending the days of his purifying, and

the solemn services of those days. In the temple, where he should have been protected as in a sanctuary, he was violently set upon by those who sought to mingle his blood with his sacrifices. Some Jews of Asia saw him in the court of the temple, excited a tumult, and seized upon him as a profaner of that sacred place, and a despiser of the law of Moses, adding that he had brought Gentiles into that holy place. Having seen Paul in the city with an Ephesian, they supposed he had brought him into the temple.

They charged Paul with ill doctrine and ill practice against the Mosaic ritual, which was false. Innocence is no fence against calumny and false accusation. It is no new thing for those who mean honestly, and act regularly, to have things laid to their charge, which they knew not, and never thought of. It is common for malicious people to bring that against those who are wise and good, with which they thought to have obliged them. Paul thought to recommend himself to their good opinion by going into the temple, and thence they take an occasion to accuse him. All the city was in an uproar. Just such a zeal the Jews here show for God's temple, as the Ephesians did for Diana's temple, ch. 19. 29. But God does not reckon himself at all honoured by those whose zeal for him transports them to such irregularities.

They drew Paul out of the temple, and shut the door between the outer and inner court of the temple, lest it should be defiled with his blood. They went about to kill him, resolving to beat him to death by blows without number; a punishment which the Jewish doctors allowed of in some cases. Tidings were brought of the tumult to the commander of the Roman forces in Jerusalem. At this feast, as at other such solemn times, the guards were at hand, and the chief captain ran down unto the multitude, who were deterred by the power of the Romans, from what they ought to have been restrained from by fear of the justice of God and the dread of his wrath. God often makes those a protection to his people, who have no affection to them; they have only a compassion for sufferers, and a regard to the public peace.

The governor took Paul and commanded him to be bound, that the people might be satisfied he did not intend to discharge him, but to examine him. *Lysias* demanded who Paul was, and of what crime

he had been guilty. Not being able to learn any thing from the clamours of the mob, he ordered him to be conveyed to the castle Antonia, and when the soldiers had brought Paul to the stairs which led to that fortress from the courts of the temple, they were obliged to carry him, to prevent the people from rushing upon and killing him. And here see what false mistaken notions of good people and good ministers, many run away with!

Josephus mentions that an Egyptian raised a seditious party of Jews, promised to show them the fall of the walls of Jerusalem from the mount of Olives, and that they should enter the city upon the ruins. The captain here says, that he led out into the wilderness four thousand men who were murderers, desperadoes; it happened a little before those days. The ringleader of this rebellion, it seems, made his escape, and the chief captain concluded that Paul was this Egyptian. Paul assured him that he was a Jew, a native of Tarsus, a considerable city, and begged to be permitted to address the multitude to silence their clamours, and rectify their mistakes. Having obtained permission, he stood on the stairs, and made signs that he wished to address them. Silence being obtained, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, or the dialect of it then generally used, well assured that he was serving the interest of Christ's kingdom, as truly and effectually as if he had been preaching in the synagogue.

God seasonably interposes for the preservation of his servants from wicked and unreasonable men; and gives them opportunities to vindicate themselves, plead for the Redeemer, and spread abroad his glorious gospel.—(10.)

When the Lord gives us an opportunity of speaking before those who are prejudiced against us, we should always prepare to speak in behalf of the truth, and to recommend the gospel of Christ to serious attention.

38. There is some difference between the account of the sacred historian and that of *Josephus*. Preference, of course, is due to the former, but the accounts do not necessarily involve any discrepancy, as the captain speaks of the number led forth into the wilderness, and *Josephus* speaks of their return from thence to attack Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1-11. *Paul's account of his conversion.*

The apostle addressed the enraged multitude, in the customary style of respect

and good-will, as "men and brethren." As many principal persons were present, he added "fathers," to denote that he was ready to render them all due honour and obedience, consistent with the will of God, notwithstanding their indignation against him. When they found he spoke thus to them, and in their own tongue, they gave more attention to him.

He then proceeded to give an account of himself, to satisfy the chief captain that he was not that Egyptian he took him to be; and the Jews also, that he was not an enemy to their law and temple, and that what he did in preaching Christ, and particularly in preaching him to the Gentiles, he did by Divine commission. He was one of their own nation, of the stock of Israel, not of any obscure family, or of some other nation. He was born in a reputable place, in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, and not born in servitude. This was, indeed, but a small matter to boast of, yet it was needful to be mentioned at this time. He had a learned and liberal education; he was brought up in Jerusalem, the principal seat of the Jewish learning, and at the feet of Gamaliel, whom they all knew to be an eminent doctor of the Jewish law. He was in his early days a very forward and eminent professor of the Jews' religion; his studies and learning were all directed that way. No one had a greater or more entire veneration for the Jewish rites, was more strict in observing them himself, or more zealous in enforcing them on others.

He had been a fiery, furious persecutor of the christian religion in the beginning of his time. He mentions this, to make it more plainly appear that the change wrought in him, when he was converted to the christian faith, was entirely the effect of Divine power; for before that sudden change was wrought in him he had the utmost hatred to christianity. He persecuted not only those who walked in this way, but the way itself.

The high-priest can witness that he was ready to be employed in any service against the christians. When they heard that many of the Jews at Damascus had embraced the christian faith, they resolved to proceed against them with the utmost severity, and could not find a fitter person to be employed in that business than Paul.

He did not change his religion from affectation of novelty; nor did it arise from discontent because he was disap-

pointed in his preferment, much less from covetousness or ambition, for it was to expose himself to disgrace and trouble; nor had he any conversation with the apostles or other christians. It was the Lord's doing, and the circumstances were enough to justify him in the change. None can condemn him for it, without casting reflection upon that Divine energy by which he was overruled. Paul relates the history of his conversion very particularly, showing that it was wholly the act of God. He was as fully bent upon persecuting the christians just before Christ arrested him as ever; he was come nigh to Damascus, and had no other thought than to execute the cruel design he was sent upon. It was a light from heaven which first startled him, it shone upon him in the open road, at high noon, and so strongly, that it struck him to the ground, and all that were with him. It was a voice from heaven which first caused him awful thoughts of Jesus Christ. This light and voice worked a great change upon him, and not upon those that journeyed with him; for though the light made them afraid, they heard not the voice of him that spake to Paul, that is, they did not distinctly hear the words. When he was thus startled, he referred himself entirely to the Divine guidance. And immediately had directions to go to Damascus, where he should hear further. As a demonstration of the greatness of that light, he tells them of the immediate effect it had upon his eye-sight. Condemned sinners are struck blind by the power of darkness, and it is a lasting blindness, like that of the unbelieving Jews; but convinced sinners are struck blind, as Paul here was, not by darkness, but by light. They are for the present brought to be at a loss within themselves, but it is in order to their being enlightened. Paul was thus struck with bodily blindness, to make him sensible of his spiritual blindness, and his mistake concerning himself, when he was alive without the law, Rom. 7. 9.

A simple relation of the Lord's dealings with us, in bringing us from opposing, to profess and promote his gospel, when delivered in a right spirit and manner, will sometimes make more impression than laboured arguments or oratory, even though it amount not to that complete demonstration of the truth manifested in the change wrought in the apostle.

3. Pupils generally sat below, or at the feet of their teachers, who were placed on elevated seats, but the expression does not necessarily denote more than that the person was a scholar.

*Kypke* considers that the expression "at the feet," is synonymous with near, or before.

Ver. 11—21. *How Paul was directed to preach to the Gentiles.*

The apostle proceeds to relate how he was confirmed in the change he had made: Observe the character here given of Ananias; a devout man according to the law; if not a Jew by birth, yet one who had been proselyted to the Jewish religion. This was the first christian whom Paul had any friendly communication with, and it was not likely that he should instil into him any notions injurious to the law. A cure was immediately wrought by him upon Paul's eyes; which miracle confirmed Ananias' mission to Paul, and ratified all that he afterwards said to him. Ananias made a declaration to him of the peculiar favour, which the Lord Jesus designed him above any other. The God of our fathers has chosen thee—this powerful call is the result of a particular choice—that thou shouldest know his will, that thou shouldest see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth, and so shouldest know his will immediately from himself. Paul was, in a particular manner, chosen to this, above others; it was a distinguishing favour, that he should see Christ upon earth, after his ascension into heaven!

The Lord having chosen the sinner that he should know his will, he is humbled, enlightened, and brought to the knowledge of Christ and his blessed gospel. Christ is here called that Just One; for he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Observe, those whom God has chosen to know his will, must look to Christ, and must see him, and hear the voice of his mouth; for it is by him that God has made known his good-will to us. Thou shalt be his witness, not only a monument of his grace, but a witness by word of mouth; thou shalt publish his gospel, as that which thou hast experienced the power of; thou shalt be his witness unto all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, of what thou hast seen and heard, now at the very first. He gave Paul counsel and encouragement to join himself to the Lord Jesus by baptism. As he had such full proof of the Lord's free love to him, and of his purpose to employ him as his minister, why should he doubt any longer,

or hesitate to profess his faith by receiving baptism, the emblem of the washing away of his sins?

Observe, 1. The great gospel privilege, sealed to us by baptism, is the remission of sins. Be baptized; and wash away thy sins; that is, receive the comfort of the pardon of thy sins in and through Jesus Christ, and lay hold on his righteousness for that purpose; and receive power against sin, for the mortifying of thy corruption. For our being washed, includes being justified and sanctified, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Be baptized, and rest not in the sign, but make sure of the thing signified, the putting away of the filth of sin. 2. The great gospel duty, which by our baptism we are bound to, is, to call on the name of the Lord, the Lord Jesus; to acknowledge him to be our Lord and our God, and to apply ourselves to him accordingly. To call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, is the distinguishing mark of a christian, 1 Cor. 1. 2. We must wash away our sins, calling on the name of the Lord; that is, we must seek for the pardon of our sins in Christ's name, and in dependence on him and his righteousness.

Paul tells how he was commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This was the great cause of the Jews' anger towards him. After his conversion, while he was in Jerusalem, worshipping in the court of the temple, he was thrown into a trance or ecstasy, in which the Lord Jesus personally appeared to him, and bade him leave that city, for the Jews would not receive his testimony. To this he ventured to object, that as they were generally acquainted with his enmity to the christians, and especially his consent to the martyrdom of Stephen, he hoped they would listen. But the Lord bade him depart without delay, as he purposed to employ him among the Gentiles.

God appoints his labourers both their day and their place, and it is fit they should acquiesce in his appointment, though it may cross their own inclinations. Providence contrives better for us than we for ourselves; to God's guidance we must therefore refer ourselves. Observe, Paul shall not go to preach among the Gentiles without a commission. And if Christ send him, his Spirit shall go along with him, and give him to see the fruit of his labours. Surely they had no reason to be angry with Paul for preaching among the Gentiles, or to construe it

an act of ill-will to his own nation, for he was directed to it by an overruling command from Heaven. But nothing can reconcile man's heart to the gospel except the special grace of God, and a man may expect more favourable hearing from entire strangers than from prejudiced neighbours, relatives, and acquaintance. Yet often those who would not receive the testimony of the servants of Christ, will be displeased at their leaving them to address others who are willing to attend to their words.

20. The word "martyr," in its original sense signified only "witness" and in that sense is always used in the New Testament, but has by degrees been considerably restrained in its signification: it has been adopted into other languages, and has become appropriated to those who suffer death in consequence of their testimony to the truth.

Ver. 22—30. *The rage of the Jews. Paul pleads that he is a Roman citizen.*

The Jews patiently heard Paul's account of his conversion, but the mention of his being sent to the Gentiles was so contrary to their bigoted self-preference, and all their national prejudices, that they would hear no more, but, in a furious rage, exclaimed that he ought to be dragged to immediate death.

Their frantic conduct astonished the Roman officer, who supposed that Paul must have committed some great crime. Yet he would not give him up to their resentment, but, according to the barbarous practice then and long after general, ordered that he should be severely scourged, that the anguish of the stripes might cause him to confess his guilt.

Paul pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from all trials and punishments of this nature. The manner of his speaking plainly shows what holy security and serenity of mind this good man enjoyed. The chief captain was surprised at this; he had taken Paul to be a vagabond Egyptian. How many of worth and merit are despised because they are not known, are looked upon and treated as the offscouring of all things, when those who count them so, if they knew their true character, would own them to be the excellent of the earth!

He would be satisfied of the truth of this from Paul's own mouth. He had himself purchased the freedom for a sum of money, and as Paul was a Jew, apparently in low circumstances, he questioned how he obtained so valuable a distinction,



but the apostle informed him he was free born. Let us value that freedom to which all the children of God are born; which no sum of money, however large, can purchase for those who remain unregenerate.

This put an immediate stop to Paul's trouble; those who were appointed to examine him by scourging, quitted the spot. Thus many are restrained from evil practices by the fear of man, who would not be restrained from them by the fear of God. See here the benefit of human laws and magistracy, and what reason we have to be thankful to God for them; for even when they have given no countenance or special protection to God's people and ministers, yet they have served to check the rage of wicked and unreasonable men. The governor, the next day, summoned the chief priests and all their council, to take cognizance of Paul's case, for he found it to be a matter of religion. He is here said to aim at the gratifying of his own curiosity. He would have known the certainty whereof he was accused of the Jews. Had he sent for Paul and talked freely with him, he might have learned more than his inquiry. But it is too common for great men to set that at a distance which might awaken their consciences.

Observe Paul's inquiry, simply, "Is it lawful?" The God whom he served he knew would support him under all sufferings inflicted for His name's sake. But if it were not lawful, the apostle's religion directed him, if possible, to avoid it. He never shrunk from a cross which his Divine Master laid upon his onward road, he never stepped aside out of that road to take one up. Though willing to suffer and die for the gospel, Paul had not that enthusiastic passion for martyrdom, which induced some in the following ages to court torments and death, as far more anxious to wear the martyr's crown in the courts of joy above, than to fulfil the martyr's duties, toiling and travelling here upon earth.—(8. 79.)

23. Threw up or tossed about their garments.

25. It is uncertain in what sense Paul was enabled to call himself a Roman citizen. It does not appear that Tarsus was a Roman colony, or that its inhabitants, as such, possessed the right of Roman citizenship, for the captain ordered Paul to be scourged though he knew him to be a Tarsæan, ch. 21. 39. There seems reason to prefer the opinion that some one of Paul's ancestors had this freedom given him for his services.—See *Bloomfield*. The binding of a Roman citizen was forbidden by the Valerian law, the beating with rods was forbidden by the Sempronian.

29. The following extract from one of Cicero's orations, explains this passage: "Whosoever he might be whom thou wert hurrying to the rack, were he even unknown to thee, if he said that he was a Roman citizen, he would necessarily obtain from thee, the prætor, by simply mentioning Rome, if not an escape, yet at least a delay of his punishment."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1-5. *Paul's defence before the sanhedrim.*

When Paul was placed before the sanhedrim, he stedfastly viewed it, observing of what persons it now consisted, and said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day. However I may be reproached, my heart does not reproach me, but witnesses for me." As if he said, "All the time in which you have looked upon me as a deserter, an apostate, and an enemy to your church, even to this day, I have lived in all good conscience before God. I have in every thing approved myself to God, and lived honestly," Heb. 13. 18. He had aimed to please God, and to do his duty, in those things for which they were so incensed against him. See here the character of an honest man. 1. He sets God before him, and lives as in his sight. 2. He makes conscience of what he says and does, and though he may be under some mistakes, yet, according to the best of his knowledge, he abstains from that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. 3. He is universally conscientious, and they that are not so are not at all truly conscientious; he is so in all manner of conversation. 4. He continues so, and perseveres; "I have lived so until this day." Those who thus live in all good conscience before God, may, like Paul, have confidence both toward God and man.

The high-priest was highly offended at Paul. In his rage he ordered him to be smitten on the mouth, as having offended with his lips, and to enjoin him silence. This brutish and barbarous method he had recourse to, when he could not answer the wisdom and spirit wherewith he spake. Paul, not in any sinful heat or passion, but with a holy zeal against the high-priest's abuse of his power, and with something of a prophetic spirit, not at all with a spirit of revenge, gives him his due character; Thou whited wall. It is the same comparison, in effect, with that of Christ, when he compares the pharisees to whited sepulchres, Matt. 23. 27.

He reads him his just doom; God shall smite thee, shall bring upon thee his sore judgments, especially spiritual judgments. Sittest thou pretending to judge me after the law, and yet commandest me to be smitten before any crime is proved upon me? It is against all law, human and divine, to hinder a man from making his defence, and to condemn him unheard. But though the answer of Paul contained a just rebuke and an evident prediction, he seems in uttering them to have been too indignant at the treatment he had received, for on being censured for reviling God's high-priest, he seems to have allowed that he had not adverted to the person who gave the orders, or was not aware that he was the high-priest.

He added, For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. Not as if great men may not hear of their faults, and public grievances be complained of by proper persons, and in a decent manner; but there must be tenderness for the honour of those in authority, because the law of God requires a particular reverence to be paid to them.

Perhaps the prophetic impulse that was upon him, and inwardly moved him to say what he did, did not permit him to observe that it was the high-priest, lest this law might have restrained him from complying with that impulse; but the Jews acknowledged that prophets might use a liberty in speaking of rulers, which others might not.—(99.)

The best men may be put off their guard, and even the zeal and faithfulness which the Holy Spirit dictates to warn sinners, may be mingled with remains of our sinful passions. But whether in reality, or only in appearance, if we speak or act inconsistently with God's precepts, it is better to decline a strenuous justification of ourselves. And a christian's maxim is, "to overcome evil with good."

5. It appears that Paul was not aware that Ananias was at that time the officiating high-priest, or he refused to acknowledge an usurped authority. Soon after the first council at Jerusalem, see chapter 15, Ananias was deprived of the high-priest's office on account of his evil conduct, and sent to Rome. Jonathan, who succeeded him, was put to death by Felix, and a space intervened before another, named Ishmael, was appointed by Agrippa. During this interval Paul was apprehended, and the sanhedrim being destitute of a president, Ananias appears to have discharged that office by his own authority, and with much tyranny, and he might not then have worn the robes of the high-priest. Some years after, Ananias was slain in a tumult raised by

his own son.—*Michaelis*. Some commentators consider that the word rendered, "I wist (or knew) not," means, I did not reflect, or consider.

Ver. 6-11. *Paul's defence. He receives a Divine assurance that he shall go to Rome.*

Paul saw those whom he knew to be sadducees, and others whom he knew to be pharisees. These differed very much from one another, yet ordinarily agreed well enough to do the business of the council together. The pharisees were orthodox in the faith of the Jewish church. The sadducees were no friends to the scripture or Divine revelation; they denied a future state; they had neither hope of eternal happiness, nor dread of eternal misery.

In this matter of difference, Paul openly declared that he was the son of a pharisee, had been educated in the opinions of that sect, and still maintained the principal doctrines controverted between them and the sadducees. When called in question for his being a christian, he might truly say he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection of the dead. The principal fact which he attested as the apostle of Christ, was his resurrection from the dead, to be the first-fruits of his people; all his doctrines were connected with that fundamental principle.

This occasioned a division in the council. There was a schism, a quarrel among them; nor could they act against Paul, when they could not agree among themselves. And it was justifiable in him by this profession of his opinion on that disputed point, to draw off the pharisees from his persecutors, and induce them to give him protection in this unlawful violence.

The pharisees hereupon took Paul's part; they strove, saying, We find no evil in this man. He had conducted himself reverently in the temple, and had attended the service; though it was but occasionally, yet it showed that he was not such an enemy to it as he was said to be. He had given a good account of himself, had declared himself correct in the great principles of religion, as well as regular and conscientious in his conversation; therefore they cannot see that he deserves death or bonds. They go further, If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him concerning Jesus, and put him upon preaching as he does, we ought not to oppose him, lest we be found fighting against God. There is great similarity between this speech and the counsel formerly given by Gamaliel, see ch. v. 39.

How easily can God defend his own cause! By a word spoken in season, the designs of the sanhedrim were defeated. While the enemies of the truth are united to oppose it they are but men. Though in their conspiracy against religion they seem to be in perfect concord, yet they are influenced by very different motives. There is no true friendship among the wicked, and in a moment, and with the utmost ease, God can turn their union into open hostility. Let no good man ever act the part of a coward. God is with him, and who shall harm him if he is a follower of that which is good?—(79.)

The gospel was witnessed to even by its adversaries; and confessions, not only of its innocency, but of its excellency, were extorted by the power of truth, even from those that persecuted it.

Between his supporters and their opponents, Paul had like to have been pulled to pieces. The chief captain upon this ordered his soldiers to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle, or tower of Antonia.

Divine consolations stood Paul in the most stead; the chief captain had rescued him out of the hands of cruel men, but still he had him in custody, and the issue he could not tell. In the night following, when Paul was full of thoughts and cares, the Lord Jesus stood by him; he was all the day long with him really, as he was in the night with him visibly. Whoever is against us, we need not fear, if the Lord stand by us; if he undertake our protection, we may set those that seek our ruin at defiance. If the Lord is with those that uphold my soul, then nothing can come amiss.

Christ said, Be of good cheer, Paul; be not discouraged; let not what has happened sadden thee, nor let what may yet be before thee frighten thee. It is the will of Christ, that his servants who are faithful should be always cheerful. Observe the argument Christ uses to encourage him; As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. Hereby he is given to understand, 1. That he had been serving Christ, as a witness for him, in what he had hitherto endured. 2. That he had not yet finished his testimony, nor was, by his imprisonment, laid aside as useless, but was reserved for further service. 3. Paul seems to have had a desire to go to Rome, to preach the gospel there. He

might be ready to conclude, that this had broken his measures, and he should never see Rome: but Christ tells him even in that he should be gratified, since he desired it for the honour of Christ, and to do good. Amidst perils and troubles the Lord will be the comfort and refuge of his faithful servants, until their testimony and work be finished; and did their enemies know how sweet their secret consolations are, they would be the less surprised at their fortitude and patience.

10. The castle of Antonia, overlooked and communicated with the temple, it was garrisoned by Roman soldiers, who kept guard on the porticoes, to prevent tumults at the festivals

Ver. 12—24. *The Jews conspire to kill Paul. Lysias sends him to Cesarea.*

The Jews perceived that Lysias would protect Paul unless he was legally convicted. Therefore forty of them conspired together, engaging by an anathema or solemn oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. They gloried in this wicked act as meritorious! and knowing that many of the chief priests and elders would favour the design, requested them to assist by sending for Paul to the council that they might waylay him. Provisionally the design was detected, and communicated to Paul by his nephew, and so made known to Lysias. The kind and humane conduct of this heathen soldier, both to the young man and to Paul, formed a strong contrast to that of the Jewish priests and rulers. But false religious principles, adopted by carnal men, will dictate such enormities as human nature would hardly be supposed capable of. Yet the Lord readily disappoints the best concerted schemes of iniquity.

Though St. Paul had the most positive assurance from Divine authority, that he should be preserved, yet he knew that the Divine providence acts by reasonable and prudent means; and that, if he neglected to use the means in his power, he could not expect God's providence to work on his behalf. He who will not help himself according to the means and power he possesses, has neither reason nor revelation to assure him that he shall receive any assistance from God.—(11.)

The Roman captain, judging that Paul would not be safe at Jerusalem, and that insurrections might ensue unless he was removed, resolved to send him to Felix, the governor, at Cesarea. A strong guard was sent to protect the apostle, and beasts

for him to ride. The escort was ordered to set off at night, both for security and as it was the best time for travelling at that season.

Glory to thy name, O God of power and mercy! though the dangers that threaten thy servants are many, thou never wantest means to deliver them. And if there had been none of these, thou couldest have preserved thy apostle by miracle. How safe are thy people amidst the greatest dangers! And how happy under the shadow of thy wings! Believing in thee, O Lord, we and ours shall assuredly be preserved from every evil work, and preserved to thy everlasting kingdom. Heavenly Father, give us by thy Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake, this precious faith.—(83.)

12. From their perverted oral traditions the Jews made it a rule that a private person might kill any one who had forsaken the law of Moses, of which crime St. Paul was accused.—*Townsend*. These vows of not eating or drinking could easily be loosed. *Lightfoot* has shown that any of their rabbis could absolve them.

Ver. 25—35. *Lysias's letter to Felix*.

Lysias wrote a letter to Felix the governor of the province, and we may observe the fair account which, upon the whole, he gave of Paul's case. That he was one whom the Jews would have killed, and that he had protected him because he was a Roman. That he could not understand what made him so odious to the Jews, therefore he brought him forth into their council to be examined there; but found that he was accused of questions of their law. That he understood there was nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. He referred Paul's case to Felix, as the most proper person to hear the cause, and give judgment upon it. The officers presented the letter, and Paul with it, to Felix, and so discharged themselves of their trust. Felix promised him a speedy trial, and ordered that he should be kept a prisoner in Herod's judgment-hall; not the common prison, but some apartment belonging to that palace, which was called by the name of Herod the Great, who built it.

God hath instruments for every work. The natural abilities and moral virtues of the heathens often have been employed for the protection of his persecuted servants. Even the world can discern between the unaffected conscientiousness of upright believers, and the zeal of false professors, though they disregard or un-

derstand not their doctrinal principles. All hearts are in God's hand, and they are blessed who put their trust in him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1—9. *The oration of Tertullus against Paul*.

The high-priest and elders followed Paul to Cesarea without loss of time.

Men undertake any thing to satisfy their evil passions and perverse humours. That a high-priest should ever be induced to leave the holy city and his religious duties to become the accuser of an innocent person, could be no other than the effect of a terrible dereliction, and the punishment of the abuse of sacred things.—(94.)

They brought a noted orator with them who understood the art of flattery, and lavished praises on Felix, who was a very bad character, and a grievous oppressor of the provinces; he had, however freed Judea from robbers. Tertullus praised him as the author of peace and prosperity to the nation, and even seemed to ascribe their imagined happiness to his care over them, instead of attributing it to the Most High. See here the unhappiness of great men, and a great unhappiness it is, to have their services magnified beyond measure, and never to be faithfully told of their faults; and hereby they are hardened and encouraged in evil. After other flattering words, he spoke concerning Paul, alleging that they had found him to be like a pestilence, infecting every one with his pernicious principles, and that he had excited the Jews to sedition, being a leader of a dangerous sect, who professed allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth, and, therefore, could not be good subjects to the Roman emperor. The old charge against God's prophets, was, that they were the troublers of the land, and against our Lord Jesus, that he perverted the nation, and forbad to give tribute to Cesar; the very same is brought against Paul here; and, though utterly false, is averred with all the confidence imaginable. He then accused Paul of an attempt to profane the temple, and alleged that Lysias had interfered, and by force prevented them from proceeding against the prisoner according to their law! Almost every sentence in this speech contained a falsehood, yet the abandoned high-priest and elders hesitated not to declare it was truth.

The selfish and malignant passions of men too often prompt their activity, and the graces and power of eloquence, too

often have been employed to mislead and prejudice men against the truth.

How different will the characters of Paul and Felix appear at the day of judgment, from what they are represented in the harangue of Tertullus ! Let not christians value the applause, or be troubled at the revilings of ungodly men, who have represented the vilest of the human race almost as gods, and the excellent of the earth as pestilences and movers of sedition.

Ver. 10-21. *Paul's defence before Felix.* "We have here Paul's defence."

I. He addresses himself very respectfully to the governor, and with confidence that he would do him justice. Here are no flattering compliments, but what was more truly respectful. It was likewise the language of one conscious of his own integrity. He does not say, Because I know thee to be a judge of inflexible justice and integrity ; but I the more cheerfully answer for myself, because I know thou hast been many years a judge to this nation ; being so, he could say of his own knowledge, that there had not formerly been any complaints against Paul. Felix was well acquainted with the Jewish nation, and with their temper and spirit, therefore would not regard what he had reason to think came from party malice.

II. Paul denies what he was charged with. He came up to Jerusalem to worship God in peace and holiness, so far was he from any design to move sedition among the people, or to profane the temple. It was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem, and he had been six days a prisoner ; he was alone, and it could not be supposed that in so short a time he could do the mischief they charged upon him. He had demeaned himself at Jerusalem very quietly and peaceably ; he was ready, if asked, to give a reason of his own hope, and to give instruction to others ; but he never made that the subject of controversy and perverse dispute, which ought always to be treated of with humility and reverence, with meekness and love. He had nothing in himself of a turbulent spirit ; They never found him raising up the people, or suggesting to them fears and jealousies concerning public affairs. He behaved as became a christian and minister, with due subjection to lawful authority. As to what they had charged him with, of moving sedition in other countries, he was wholly innocent. He had done no real prejudice, but real

service, and would gladly have done more, to the nation of the Jews. He laments that he was accused of things which could not be proved against him. He shows the iniquity of his prosecutors. He appeals to the equity of his judge, to give right judgment in the matter thus brought before him, to which it was his duty to attend.

III. Paul gives a just account of himself, which clears him from crime, and likewise intimates the true reason of the violence in prosecuting him. The controversy is in a matter of religion, and such controversies are commonly most furious and violent. It is no new thing for the right way of worshipping God to be called heresy, and for the best of God's servants to be stigmatized as sectaries. Let us never be driven from any good way by its having an ill name. He vindicates himself from this imputation. He worships the God of his fathers, and therefore is right in the object of his worship. He also refers to the practice of all his pious ancestors. It is very comfortable, in our worshipping God, to look to him as the God of our fathers. He believes all things written in the law and the prophets ; his religion is grounded upon, and governed by the holy scriptures ; he speaks and acts according to them. He sets not up any other rule of faith or practice but the scriptures. Divine revelation, as it is in the scripture, he resolves to live and die by, therefore he is not a heretic.

He has a believing expectation of a future state, and is right in the great end of his worship. I have hope toward God ; all my expectation is from him, and therefore all my desire is toward him, and all my dependence upon him ; my hope is toward God, not toward the world ; toward another world, not toward this.

Observe, 1. There shall be a resurrection of the dead, of all men from the beginning to the end of time. 2. It shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust ; the sanctified and the unsanctified. This implies, that it will be a resurrection to a final judgment, by which all the children of men will be determined to everlasting happiness or misery. 3. God is to be depended upon for the resurrection of the dead ; those who doubt of it betray ignorance, both of the scriptures and of the power of God, Matt. 22. 29. 4. The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental article of our

creed, as it was of that of the Jewish church; it was the expectation of the ancient patriarchs; but is more clearly revealed, and is more fully confirmed by the gospel. 5. In all our religion we ought to serve God with full confidence in him, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, doing all in preparation for that, and expecting our recompense in that. 6. His conversation is consistent with his devotion. Prophets and their doctrines were to be tried by their fruits.

Paul's aim and desire was to have a conscience void of offence. Either a conscience not offending, not flattering, or dealing deceitfully, or misleading him; or a conscience not offended. It is like Job's resolution, My heart shall not reproach me: I will not give it occasion to do so. His care and endeavour, in pursuance of this, was to abstain from many things inclination led him to, and to abound in all the exercises of religion that are most spiritual, at all times, and to all things; both towards God, and towards man. His conscientious care extended to the whole of his duty. The inducement to it is: Because I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

IV. Having made confession of his faith, Paul gives a plain and faithful account of his case, and of the wrong done him. It was very hard to accuse him as an enemy to their nation, when, after long absence from Jerusalem, he came to bring alms to his nation. It was very hard to accuse him of having profaned the temple, when he brought offerings to the temple, purifying himself according to the law, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. And since the Jews of Asia were not there to prove any thing done amiss in the temple, let the high-priest and the elders say whether they have found any evil doing in him, except it were criminal to assert the belief in the resurrection.

If accused of being more earnest in the things of God than our neighbours, what is our reply? Do we shrink from the accusation? How many are there in the world who would rather be accused of any weakness—nay, even of wickedness, than of an earnest fervent feeling of love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of devotedness to his service! Can such imagine that He will confess them when he cometh in his glory, and before the angels of God? If there be any sight pleasing to the God

of our salvation, and a sight at which the angels rejoice—it is, to behold a devoted follower of the Lord, here upon earth acknowledging he is guilty, if it be a crime to love the Lord who died for him, with all his heart and soul, and mind, and strength. And that he will not in silence see his word despised, or hear his name profaned, he will rather risk the ridicule or the hatred of the world, than one frown from that gracious Being whose love is better than life.—(8.)

Ver. 22—27. *Felix trembles at the reasoning of Paul.*

The defence of Paul was so convincing and the charges of Tertullus were so clearly refuted, that Felix must have perceived the accusation was a mere party matter. Having further knowledge respecting the christian doctrine than Lysias, he was more aware of the motives and intentions of the Jews, and deferred the further hearing of the cause. Though he would not displease the Jews by releasing Paul, he allowed him greater liberty, and the christians of Cesarea had permission to have access to him.

Having been absent for a time, Felix seems to have returned, bringing with him Drusilla, a profligate woman, the daughter of Herod, who had left her husband to live with the Roman governor as his wife. They were desirous to hear a complete account of the christian faith, and the apostle was sent for. We have not the particulars of his discourse, but he endeavoured to show his noble auditors the importance of the gospel to themselves. He reasoned concerning the nature and obligations of righteousness, temperance, and of a judgment to come; thus showing the oppressive judge and his licentious paramour their need of repentance, forgiveness, and of the grace of the gospel. Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance, to convince Felix of his unrighteousness and intemperance, which he had been notoriously guilty of; that, seeing the odiousness of them, and that he was obnoxious to the wrath of God for them, Eph. 5. 6, he might inquire concerning the faith of Christ, with a resolution to embrace it.

Justice respects our conduct in life, particularly in reference to others; temperance, the state and government of our souls, in reference to God. He who does not exercise himself in these has neither the form nor the power of godliness, and

consequently must be overwhelmed with the Divine wrath, in the day of God's appearing.—(11)

The licentious Jewess seems to have remained unaffected; but Felix, convicted in his conscience, trembled before his prisoner, from dread of the wrath to come. So great is the power of Divine truth that it overawes the most powerful and the most profligate, and makes a prince tremble before his prisoner. How then will such men stand before the bar of God.

See here, 1. The power of the word of God. It is searching; it is startling; it can strike a terror into the heart of the most proud and daring sinner, by setting his sins in order before him, and showing him the terrors of the Lord. 2. The workings of natural conscience, when it is startled and awakened, will fill the soul with horror at its own deformity and danger. A prospect of the judgment to come is enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble. He trembled, but that was all. Paul's trembling and the jailer's ended in their conversion; but this of Felix did not. Many are startled by the word of God, who are not effectually changed by it. Many fear the consequences of sin, yet continue in love and league with sin. In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous; nothing is of more fatal consequence than men's putting off their conversion from time to time. Felix put off this matter to a more convenient season, but we do not find that the more convenient season ever came. The present season is, without doubt, the most convenient season. Behold now is the accepted time. To-day, if ye will hear his voice.

Felix, instead of inquiring respecting the way to be saved, put the matter off, intimating that he was too much engaged then to consider the subject further. He promised to send for the apostle when more at leisure, and to hear his doctrines. Thus his terrors soon subsided, and his covetousness and iniquities retained full dominion. As he knew Paul had many friends, he hoped they would buy his liberty, therefore he often talked with him, but not concerning faith in Christ; and when succeeded by another governor, he left Paul bound to please the Jews. In this he was disappointed: they accused him of oppression, and he narrowly escaped punishment. Those who aim to please God, by doing good, will have

what they aim at; but not those who seek to please men by doing evil. Probably the Christians would not countenance the bribery and extortion of Felix, even to purchase Paul's liberty; they would not thus do evil that good might come.

Though Felix had felt a momentary impression of guilt, his heart was not changed. Truth was an unwelcome visitant, and he made haste to dismiss it. What! was any other business more urgent than the reformation of his conduct, or more important than the salvation of his soul? But an hour, or a minute, appears too long, when we are compelled to hear those practices exposed and condemned which we cannot justify, and are resolved not to forsake. From hence, perceive what power the word of God can exert on the conscience. When a plain apostle preaches, a powerful governor trembles! Also, that impressions or emotions which sometimes appear to go before conversion, frequently pass away without producing any lasting effect. Sinners often start up like a man roused from his sleep by a loud noise, but soon sink again into their usual state of insensibility. Then let us not be deceived by occasional appearances of religion in ourselves or in others. Above all, let us not trifle with the word of God. Procrastinating sinner, why is not the present a convenient time? Do you expect that as you advance in life your heart will grow softer, or that the influence of the word will decline? Are you not at this moment in danger of eternal perdition? Disregard not, therefore, the voice of God, nor say to him, We will afterwards hear you, lest He refuse to answer when distress and anguish come upon you. Read his awful declaration in the book of Proverbs, 1. 24—31.—(79.)

26. *Tacitus* states of Felix that he exercised the royal authority with the spirit of a slave, and indulged in every species of cruelty and lust. History records him to have been an oppressive, avaricious, and tyrannical governor, who had persuaded Drusilla to leave her lawful husband. The account here given of his character by the evangelist, agrees very closely with such a delineation. In the conduct of both Felix and Festus it is observable how the evil practices of such governors were in a considerable degree restrained by the equity of the Roman laws, and by the manner in which judicial proceedings were conducted.

27. This base artifice of Felix did not allay the accusations of the Jews against his late government. *Josephus* states they impeached him at Rome before Nero; but he was pardoned through the interest of his brother Pallas.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1—12. *Paul before Festus. He appeals to Cesar.*

How speedy the Jews were in their applications to Festus concerning Paul as soon as he was come unto the province! See how restless malice is! Paul more patiently bears the lengthening out of his imprisonment than his enemies do the delay of his prosecution, even unto the death. They informed the governor against Paul before he was brought upon a fair trial, that so they might, if possible, prejudge the cause.

Now that the governor was at Jerusalem, they desired he would send for Paul, and try him there, which looked reasonable, because he was charged with having profaned the temple at Jerusalem; but what they designed, was to murder him upon the road. They desired favour against Paul. They will take it as a favour if the governor will condemn Paul, though they can prove no crime upon him. Persecutors deem it a peculiar favour to have their malice gratified.

It does not appear that Festus had any suspicion of their design to murder Paul, but whatever was his reason for refusing, God made use of it as a means of preserving Paul out of the hands of his enemies. And Festus will not take it for granted that there is wickedness in him till it is proved.

On the return of Festus to Cesarea, the Jews hastened thither. They brought many and grievous accusations against Paul, so it should be read. They could not prove what they alleged against him; they laid to his charge things that he knew not. When Paul came to speak for himself, he insisted that he was not guilty; he had not violated the law of the Jews, nor taught any doctrines destructive of it. Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law. He had not profaned the temple, nor put any contempt at all upon the temple service. Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, as far as he could go with safety against a citizen of Rome, asked him whether he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and clear himself there. In suffering times the prudence of the Lord's people is tried, as well as their patience; they need wisdom.

Paul knew that if he were removed to Jerusalem, the Jews would find some means to be the death of him, and there-

fore pleaded, that as a citizen of Rome, it was most proper for him to be tried at Cesarea, at Cesar's judgment-seat, in the city which was the metropolis of the province. Paul's owning that he ought to be judged at Cesar's judgment-seat, plainly proves that Christ's ministers are not exempted from the jurisdiction of the civil powers, but ought to be subject to them, as far as they can with good conscience. As a member of the Jewish nation, he had done nothing to make himself obnoxious to them. It becomes those who are innocent to insist upon their innocence. He was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course. If he be guilty of any capital crime that deserves death, he will accept the punishment of his iniquity. But if there are none of the things whereof these accuse him, no man may deliver him unto them, without palpable injustice. And since he is continually in danger of the Jews, and one attempt is made after another to get him into their hands, he flies to the last refuge, since he cannot have justice done him in any other way; "I appeal unto Cesar."

Paul is neither released nor condemned. It is an instance of the slow steps which Providence takes; by which we are often made ashamed, both of our hopes and of our fears, and are kept waiting on God.

It seems by what Agrippa said, that, by the regular course of the Roman law, a Roman citizen might appeal at any time to a superior court, even to the supreme. Festus therefore comes to this resolution; Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? Unto Cesar thou shalt go. He found there was something very extraordinary in the case, which he was afraid of giving judgment upon, and therefore he transmitted it to the personal cognizance of the emperor at Rome.

Ver. 13—27. *Festus confers with Agrippa respecting Paul.*

After certain days, king Agrippa came to Cesarea. Bernice came with him, she was his own sister, now a widow. They came to compliment Festus upon his accession to the government, that Agrippa, who had the government of Galilee, might act in concert with him. Festus gave a particular account to king Agrippa concerning Paul. How many unjust and precipitate judgments will the Roman maxim, ver. 16. condemn, a heathen guided only by the light of nature, follows law



and custom exactly, yet how many christians will not follow the rules of truth, justice and charity, in judging their brethren!—(94.)

Festus was disappointed in the charge against Paul; he supposed they had something to accuse him of dangerous either to private property or the public peace, cognizable in the Roman courts, and what the governor was properly the judge of. But he finds the matter is not so, they had certain questions against him, instead of proofs and evidences; they were questions of their own religion. The questions relative to God's worship, the way of salvation, and the truths of the gospel, appear doubtful and uninteresting to worldly men, and mere politicians. But the great question was concerning one Jesus that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

See how slightly this Roman speaks of Christ, and of the great controversy between the Jews and the christians, whether he were the Messiah promised or no; and of the great proof of his being the Messiah, his resurrection from the dead! But what Paul affirmed concerning Jesus, that he is alive, is a truth of such vast importance, that if it be not true we are all undone. The day is at hand when Festus and the whole world will see that all the concerns of the Roman empire were frivolous and unimportant, compared with this question of Christ's resurrection. Those who had means of instruction and have despised them, will be awfully convinced of their sin and folly. Festus adds that Paul had chosen rather to remove his cause to Rome than to Jerusalem.

Agrippa had heard of Paul, and knows what this question is; nothing would please him more than to hear him. Agrippa and Festus agree he shall be heard in public, great preparations are made.

Here was a most magnificent assembly brought together to hear the truths of the gospel, though they only meant to gratify their curiosity by attending to the defence of a prisoner! Many, even now, attend at the places of hearing the word of God with "great pomp," and too often with no better motive than curiosity. And though ministers do not have to stand as prisoners to make a defence for their lives, yet, numbers affect to sit in judgment upon them, desirous to make them offenders for a word, rather than to learn from them the truth and will of God, for

the salvation of their souls. But the pomp of this appearance was outshone by the real glory of the poor prisoner at the bar. What was the honour of their fine appearance, compared with that of his wisdom, and grace, and holiness; his courage and constancy in suffering for Christ! His bonds in so good a cause were more glorious than their chains of gold; and his guards than their equipage.

Festus represented the prisoner as one whom the Jews had great spite against; not only the rulers, but the multitude of them. They could not charge him with any capital crime, but they want to have him out of the way. He confesses the prisoner's innocence; and it was much for the honour of Paul that he had a public acknowledgment of this from his judge. He acquaints them with the present state of the case; and that he had admitted his appeal. He desires their assistance in examining the matter calmly and impartially. He thought it unreasonable to send a prisoner so far as Rome, and not to signify the crimes laid against him, that the matter might be put in readiness for the emperor's determination; and he could not as yet write any thing certain concerning Paul, so confused were the informations against him.

Festus had no crime to lay to the charge of the apostle. Hence learn, that although God sometimes permits his servants to be loaded with slanders and reproaches, he will find a time to clear them; he will not suffer these things to cleave to them, but will cause their judges to confess their innocence. It is no small mercy to have God clear up our righteousness as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day, to have nothing certain laid to our charge. God made the apostle's enemies herein to do him right.—(73.)

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1—11. *Paul's defence before Agrippa.*

Paul was silent till he had liberty allowed him to speak for himself. He stretched forth his hand, as one who had perfect freedom and command of himself; it also intimates that he was in earnest. He cheerfully embraces the opportunity of setting forth the cause he suffered for. Christianity teaches us to give a reason of the hope that is in us, and also to render honour to whom honour is due, without flattery or fear of man. Since he is to answer for himself, he is glad it is

before king Agrippa, who, being himself a proselyte to the Jewish religion, understood those matters better than other Roman governors. He was well versed in the scriptures of the Old Testament, therefore could make the better judgment upon the controversy concerning Jesus being the Messiah. Paul had reason to fear that Agrippa was prejudiced against him. He therefore says, I beseech thee; hear me patiently. Surely we may expect, when we preach the faith of Christ, to be heard patiently.

Paul professes that he still adhered to all the good in which he was first educated and trained up. See here what his religion was. His education was neither foreign nor obscure, it was among his own nation at Jerusalem. Those who knew him from the beginning, could testify that he was a pharisee; that he was not only an observer of all the ordinances of the Jewish religion, but most exact in observing the institutions of it himself, and rigid in imposing them on others.

That the unbelieving Jews might be left without excuse, here is an apostle raised up, who had sat at the feet of their most eminent doctors. He was a moralist, a man of virtue; and if he lived like a pharisee, he had not learned the arts of the crafty, covetous pharisees; but he was, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; he was not chargeable with any instances of open vice and profaneness. He was sound in the faith. They could not say, He quitted his religion for want of principle, or for want of regard to Divine revelation. He always had veneration for the ancient promise made of God unto the fathers, and built his hope upon it.

Paul knew very well that all this would not justify him before God, yet he knew it was for his reputation among the Jews, and an argument such as Agrippa would feel, that he was not such a man as they represented him to be. Though he counted it but loss, that he might win Christ, yet he mentioned this when it might serve to honour Christ. He knew very well that he was while a pharisee a stranger to the spiritual nature of the Divine law, and that except his righteousness exceeded this, he should never go to heaven; but, according to the light he enjoyed, he had lived in all good conscience before God.

See here what his religion is; he has not such zeal for the ceremonial law as

he had in his youth; the sacrifices and offerings appointed by that are superseded by the great Sacrifice which they typified. Of ceremonial purifications from them he makes no conscience, and thinks the Levitical priesthood is swallowed up in the priesthood of Christ; but, as to the main principles of his religion, he is as zealous as ever; even more so, he resolves to live and die by them.

His religion is built upon the promise made of God unto the fathers; it is built upon Divine revelation, which he receives and believes, and ventures his soul upon; it is built upon Divine grace, and that grace manifested and conveyed by promise. Christ and heaven are the two great doctrines of the gospel—that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. These are the matter of the promise made unto the fathers. For the chief promise to Abraham and to the fathers, related to the Messiah, but it implied that of the resurrection and heavenly happiness. Paul hoped in Jesus as the promised Redeemer; he testified His resurrection, and avowed the expectation of a resurrection of the just and the unjust: for this he was persecuted.

His religion consists not in the observation of carnal ordinances, but in hope in Christ as the promised Seed; he hoped in him to receive the blessing of God, and to be truly blessed. He had no confidence in the flesh, but in Christ; no expectation of great things in this world, but of greater things in the other world. Herein he concurred with all the pious Jews; his faith was not singular. Our twelve tribes, the body of the Jewish church, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come to the good promised. They all hope for a Messiah to come, and christians hope in a Messiah already come; so we all build upon the same promise.

Nay, the Jewish church, in the hope of this promise, earnestly served God day and night. The temple service, which consisted in a continual course of religious duties, day and night, was kept up in the profession of faith in the promise of eternal life, and in expectation of it. It may also refer to particular persons who continued in the communion of the Jewish church, and were very devout in their way, serving God with a close application of mind, and constancy in it. The prospect of eternal life should engage us to diligence and perseverance in all religious

exercises. Yet the sadducees hated Paul for preaching the resurrection, and the other Jews joined them because he testified that Jesus was risen, and was the promised Redeemer of Israel. Perhaps many of his hearers deemed the doctrine of the resurrection, and the rising of Jesus from the dead to be incredible. But why should they think so? Was not the great Creator able to restore the dead to life? Could not sufficient reasons be shown for Divine interposition—that God's truth might be attested, his worshippers encouraged, and his name glorified? Many things are deemed incredible, only because the infinite nature and perfections of Him that hath revealed, performed, or promised them, are overlooked.

Paul acknowledges, that while he continued a pharisee, he was a bitter enemy to christianity. This shows that his becoming a christian and a preacher, was not the result of previous inclination in favour of the christian doctrine. He thought with himself that he ought to do every thing that lay in his power, contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It is possible for those to think they are doing their duty, who are wilfully persisting in the greatest sin.

There is not a more violent principle in the world than conscience misinformed; when Paul thought it his duty to do all he could against the name of Christ, he spared no pains in it. He gives an account of what he did, and aggravates it as one that was truly penitent. In every respect he was enraged against them to a degree which might justly be deemed the excess of madness. Persecutors are madmen, and some of them exceedingly mad. There is not a more restless principle than malice, especially when it pretends conscience. This was Paul's character, and manner of life in the beginning of his time; for all imaginable outward objections lay against his being a christian.

Those who have been most strict in their conduct before conversion, will afterwards see abundant reason for deep humiliation, even on account of things which they then thought ought to have been done. Their opposition to the gospel, their endeavours to compel or seduce others into neglect or opposition, will sit heavy on their minds, and they will allow that conduct to be madness, in which they once gloried.

11. Such a character as Paul could not have

been 'deceived by illiterate fishermen, and such, let it be remembered, the apostles were in respect of worldly circumstances. Neither, indeed, could they have thought of turning the most enlightened of their opponents, and the most cruel of their persecutors into an apostle, nor was it possible for them to cause those appearances which attended his conversion. It was not an imagination of his own; he was not alone. Nor was his mind under any sudden impression or momentary influence; not only did he dedicate his after life to pursuing an entirely altered course, but he was attended to by men of all ranks and characters, many of whom were of considerable ability.

Ver. 12—23. *Paul's account of his conversion and preaching to the Gentiles.*

Paul here shows, that he was made a christian by Divine power; by a revelation of Christ both to him and in him; and this when in the full career of his sin. The circumstances were such that it was without doubt a Divine appearance. Christ himself appeared to Paul. He heard a heavenly voice, an articulate one, speaking to him; it is here said to be in the Hebrew tongue, his native language. Christ called him by his name, and convinced him of that great sin which he was then committing, and interested Himself in the sufferings of his followers. Paul asked, Who art thou, Lord? He was amazed to hear him speak from heaven, to see him surrounded with glory whom he had loaded with all possible ignominy. This convinced him that Jesus is the Messiah, for he is not only risen from the dead, but he has received honour and glory from God the father.

Paul was made a minister by Divine authority; the same Jesus who appeared to him in that glorious light, ordered him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Those whom Christ, by the light of his gospel, casts down in humiliation for sin, shall find that it is in order to their rising and standing upon their feet, in spiritual grace, strength, and comfort. Christ will manifest himself to all whom he makes his ministers; for how can they preach him who do not know him? The gospel he preached he received from Christ; but he received it gradually, as there was occasion. Christ's witnesses are under his special care, and he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. Great sufferings are reconcilable to the promise of the deliverance of God's people, for it is not promised that they shall be kept from trouble, but kept through it.

The apostle added an account of his commission to preach to the Gentiles.

1. A world that sits in darkness must be enlightened; those must be brought to know the things that belong to their everlasting peace, who are yet ignorant of them. His preaching shall not only make known to them things which they had not before heard of, but shall be the vehicle of the Divine grace and power, by which their understandings shall be enlightened to receive those things, and to bid them welcome. Christ opens the heart by opening the eyes. The great design of the gospel is, to instruct the ignorant, and to rectify the mistakes of those who are in error, that things may be set and seen in a true light. The end and effect of his ministry among them, through the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying his word, would be "the opening of their eyes;" for though their bodily eyes were open, and their mental powers penetrating, they had hitherto been spiritually blind, so that they could see nothing of the glory of God, or of his truth and will. But this language must not be confined to idolaters, nor must it be supposed that mere nominal christians are of a better nature than other men.

2. A world that lies in wickedness must be sanctified and reformed; it is not enough for them to have their eyes opened, they must have their hearts renewed; not enough to be turned from darkness to light, but they must be turned from the power of Satan unto God. Sinners are under the power of Satan; idolaters are so in a special manner. All sinners are under the influence of his temptations, and yield themselves captives to him; converting grace turns and brings them to conform to the rules of God's word, and to comply with the dictates and directions of his Spirit. When gracious dispositions are strong in the soul, as corrupt and sinful dispositions had been, it is turned from the power of Satan unto God.

There is great happiness designed for the Gentiles by this work—that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those which are sanctified. That they may be restored to the Divine favour, which by sin they have forfeited. That they may be happy in the enjoyment of Him. Heaven is an inheritance, it descends to all the children of God; if children, then heirs. All who are effectually turned from sin to God, are not only pardoned, but have a grant of a rich inheritance. The forgiveness of sins makes way for this. All that

shall be saved hereafter, are sanctified now; those who have the heavenly inheritance, must have it in this way; none can be happy who are not holy; nor shall any be saints in heaven that are not first saints on earth. We need no more to make us happy than to have our lot among those who are sanctified. We are sanctified and saved by faith in Christ; that faith which not only receives Divine revelation in general, but which in particular takes hold upon Jesus Christ and his mediation; by which we rely upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, and resign ourselves to him as the Lord our Ruler; by this we receive the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life.

God gave Paul a heart to comply with the call. He intimated to Agrippa that he could not suppose obedience should be refused to a vision so evidently from heaven. If Paul had conferred with flesh and blood, and had been swayed by worldly interest, he would, like Jonah, have gone any where rather than upon this errand; but God enabled him to go through a great deal of work, though in it he grappled with a great deal of difficulty. As true faith, so true repentance will work. He suffered evil, not only for doing well himself, but for doing good to others. It was now above twenty years since Paul was converted, and all that time he had preached the gospel in the midst of hazards; but those who are employed in work for God shall obtain help from God. He preached no doctrine but what agreed with the scriptures of the Old Testament. It was an evidence of the condescending grace of the gospel, that it was witnessed to the meanest, the poor were welcome, and it was shown to the greatest.

Paul preached, 1. That Christ should suffer; that the Messiah should be not only a man, and capable of suffering, but that, as Messiah, he should be appointed to sufferings; that his ignominious death was pursuant to his undertaking. The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and Paul's preaching exasperated them; but in preaching it he preached the fulfilling the Old Testament predictions. 2. That Christ should be the first that should rise from the dead; the Head or principal One. He was the first that rose from the dead, to die no more; and to show that the resurrection of all believers is in virtue of his. 3. That he should show light unto the people, and to

the Gentiles; to the people of the Jews first, to them he showed light by himself; then to the Gentiles, by the ministry of his apostles. It was foretold by the Old Testament prophets, that the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of God by the Messiah; and what in this could the Jews justly be displeased at. Thus the true convert can give a reason of his hope, and a good account of the change manifest in him. Being convinced of his guilt and danger as a transgressor of God's law, and a stranger to his grace, he is led to seek for mercy and to believe in the Saviour. Thus the Lord reconciles sinners to himself, and sends them to their fellow-sinners, to beseech them to be reconciled to Him. And, when thus enlightened and favoured, they will not be disobedient to the commands of their Redeemer. All who understand the gospel will perceive that it contains directions, motives, and encouragements for sinners to repent, turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Yet for going about and calling on men thus to repent and to be converted, vast numbers have been blamed and persecuted.

18. "That they may turn."—*Scholefield.*

23. That he first by his resurrection from the dead should show light.—*Scholefield.*

Ver. 24—32. *Festus and Agrippa convinced of Paul's innocence.*

While Paul was confirming his own testimony to the resurrection and the glory of the Lord Jesus from the predictions of scripture, he was interrupted by Festus. These subjects appeared to him so incredible, or so absurd, that he was surprised to hear Paul speak of them as a matter of universal concern, and to aver that one from the despised Jews should be an enlightener of the Gentiles. He therefore exclaimed to Paul that he was beside himself—that his over study about such abstract and visionary matters had made him mad. The apostle gravely replied to this rude interruption, calmly addressing the governor by his usual title, and assuring him that he declared nothing but the truth. He teaches us not to render railing for railing, nor one invidious character for another. It becomes us, upon all occasions, to speak the words of truth and soberness, and then we may despise the unjust censures of men.

Paul appealed to Agrippa; he says the king knows of these things, concerning Christ, and his death and resurrection, and the prophecies of the Old Testament,

which had their accomplishment therein—he therefore spake freely before him, who knew these were not fancies, but matters of fact. He was fully persuaded that none of these things were hidden from him; not even those which he had related concerning his own conversion, and the commission he had received to preach the gospel. Agrippa could not but have heard of them. These things were not done in a corner; any of the Jews present might have witnessed for him, therefore it was unreasonable to censure him as a distracted man for relating it, much more for speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ, which were so universally spoken of.

Active and laborious preachers of the gospel commonly have been despised as visionaries, or madmen, for being zealous about invisible objects, for believing such mysterious doctrines, crediting such extraordinary facts, and relating such remarkable experiences; and for attesting that the same faith and diligence, and a similar experience, are necessary to all men, whatever their rank, in order to their salvation. But apostles and prophets, and the Son of God himself, were exposed to this charge, and none need be moved thereby, when Divine grace has made them wise unto salvation.

Paul still applies to Agrippa, and asks whether he does not receive the scriptures of the Old Testament as a Divine revelation, and admit them as foretelling good things to come. He takes it for granted; every one knew that Agrippa professed the Jews' religion. It is well to have to deal with men acquainted with the scriptures, and who believe them; of such there is some hold.

Agrippa sees a great deal of reason for christianity, the proofs of it, he owns, are strong, and such as he cannot answer, the objections against it trifling, and such as he cannot insist upon. His understanding and judgment were for the time convinced, but his heart was not changed. His conduct and temper were widely different from the humility and spirituality of the gospel.

Many are *almost* persuaded to be religious, who are not *quite* persuaded; they are under strong convictions of their duty, and of the excellency of the ways of God, but yet are overruled by some outward inducements, and do not pursue their convictions.

Paul utters a pious wish that all his hearers were christians. He intimates his satisfaction, not only in the truth, but in the benefit and advantage, of christianity. He intimates his trouble and concern that Agrippa went no further than being almost a christian, and was not altogether one. He intimates that it was the concern of every one to become true christians; that there is grace enough in Christ for all. He wished that they might be better than he was now, as to his outward condition; that they might taste as much as he did of the advantages which attended religion, but not so much of its crosses. He thus expressed his full conviction of the truth of the gospel, the absolute necessity of faith in Christ in order to salvation, his opinion that the noble personages then before him did not believe, and his fear that they would reject the gospel to their final condemnation.

Such salvation, from such bondage, does the gospel of Christ offer to the Gentiles—to a lost world! Yet it is with extreme difficulty that any person can be persuaded he needs a similar work of grace on his heart, to that which was necessary for the conversion of the Gentiles.—(11.)

Agrippa seems to have been made uneasy by Paul's discourse; he was the first to dismiss the subject and to retire. He gave his opinion that Paul was innocent, which would give Festus a more favourable opinion of him; but we do not find that any of them inquired further after Christ and his salvation.

Some think Agrippa and Festus, being unwilling to disoblige the Jews by setting Paul at liberty, made an excuse for continuing him in custody; but his appealing to Cesar was lawful, and what became a Roman citizen; and when he made it, appeared to him, as the case then stood, to be for the best. There was a providence in it. He was told that he must bear witness to Christ at Rome, ch. 23. 11. It is the same to him, whether he goes thither a prisoner or at his liberty; he knows the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

Let us beware of fatal irresolution and hesitation in our own conduct; and recollect how far the being *almost* persuaded to be a christian, is from being *altogether* such a one as Paul was, and as every true believer is. We should endeavour to impress the minds of others with this

truth, while we sincerely desire and pray that they may participate all our hopes and comforts, and be exempted from our crosses and trials; yet even this christian affection, though expressed in the kindest manner, will not recommend the gospel to the hearts of worldly men. They grow weary of such humbling and serious reflections. How many have been almost persuaded to be christians who at last perished in their sins! Let us pray that none of us may be among that number!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1—11. *Paul's voyage towards Rome.*

Paul has appealed to Cesar, and to Cesar he must go. It was determined by the counsel of God, before it was determined by the counsel of Festus, that Paul should go to Rome; for God had work for him to do there. He was committed to one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. They went on board a ship of Adramyttium, a sea-port of Africa, whence this ship, as it should seem, made a coasting voyage for Syria. There were other prisoners committed to the custody of the same centurion. Paul was joined with these, as Christ with the thieves that were crucified with him. It is no new thing for the innocent to be numbered among the transgressors. He had also some friends with him, Luke particularly, the penman of this book. The Lord will provide companions and consolations to his servants in all their multiplied and various trials. Those who go long voyages at sea, have special need of wisdom, that they may do good to the company they are in.

The course they steered and the places they touched at are particularly recorded; the truth of the history is thus proved. At Sidon, Julius gave Paul liberty to go among his friends. God herein encourages those who suffer for him, to trust in him; for he can put it into the hearts of those to befriend them, from whom they least expect it. It gives likewise an instance of Paul's fidelity; he faithfully returns to his imprisonment. They thence sailed under Cyprus, the wind not favouring them. Sailors must make the best of their wind, whatever point it is in; so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world. When the winds are contrary, yet we must be getting forward as well as we can.

At Myra, they went on board a vessel of Alexandria. Although their voyage hitherto was not tempestuous, yet it was very tedious. Thus many who are not driven backward in their affairs by cross providences, do not get forward by favourable providences. And many real christians complain in the concerns of their souls, that they have much ado to keep their ground. The place they came to was called the Fair Havens. Yet it was not the harbour they were bound for; it was a fair haven, but not their haven. However agreeable circumstances may be in this world, we are not at home; we must arise and depart; though it be a fair haven, it is not the desired haven. It was not a commodious haven to winter in. Every fair haven is not a safe haven. Sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was already past, that is, the day of atonement, about the 20th of our September. Paul gave notice of their danger. But the centurion gave more regard to the master and owner of the ship than to Paul. Those know not what dangers they run into, who will be governed more by human prudence than by Divine revelation. The centurion was very civil to Paul, but would not be governed by his advice. Many show respect to good ministers, who will not take their advice. Ezek. 33. 31. But disobedience to the admonitions of faithful ministers, however men may despise them, will induce troubles and dangers, and the event will convince them of the vanity of their hopes, and the folly of their conduct.

1. It appears from *Josephus* that at this period a small body of Roman soldiers were stationed at Cesarea who were called by the title of Augustan, although the greater part of the garrison were Syrians.

Ver. 12—20. *Paul and his companions endangered by a tempest.*

It is better to be in an incommodious harbour, than in a tempestuous sea; but the more part advised to depart; yet they aimed not to go far, only to another port of the same island. They set out with a fair wind, upon which they flattered themselves with hopes that they should easily gain their point. Those who launch forth on the ocean of this world, with a fair gale, know not what storms they may meet with; and therefore must not take it for granted that they have obtained their purpose. They are soon made sensible of their folly in giving

more credit to a smiling wind than to the word of God by Paul's mouth, which gave them fair warning of an approaching storm.

There arose a tempestuous wind. They were near their haven, and were pleasing themselves with the thought of wintering there, when of a sudden they are in this distress. Let us never expect perfect security, nor perpetual serenity, till we come to heaven. They saw neither sun nor stars for many days; this made the tempest the more terrible. The use of the loadstone or compass, for directing sailors, not being then found out, they had no guide, when they could see neither sun nor stars. Thus melancholy sometimes is the condition of the people of God upon a spiritual account; they walk in darkness, and have no light. Neither sun nor stars appear; they cannot dwell, nay, they cannot fasten upon any thing comfortable or encouraging. They had no small tempest—all the rigours of that season of the year. They betook themselves to all the means that sailors in distress had recourse to in those days. They let the ship run adrift, finding it was to no purpose to ply either the oar or the sail. They nevertheless did what they could to avoid the present danger. There was a little island called Claudia, and when they were near that, they took care to prevent their shipwreck. They had much work to come by the boat, but at last they took it up; that might be of use in an exigence. They used other means which were proper in those times. The next day they threw the goods and merchandise overboard.

See what the wealth of this world is; how much soever it is coveted as a blessing, the time may come when it will be a burden, not only too heavy to be carried safely, but heavy enough to sink him that has it! Riches are often kept by the owners thereof to their hurt, Eccl. 5. 13, and parted with to their good. But see the folly of the children of this world; they can be prodigal of their goods for the saving of their lives, yet are sparing of them in works of piety and charity, and in suffering for Christ, though told by eternal Truth itself, that those shall be recompensed more than a thousand fold in the resurrection of the just. Any man will rather make shipwreck of his goods than of his life; but many rather make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, than of their goods.

The third day they cast out the tackling of the ship; the utensils of it. At last they were brought to despair; the storm continued, and they saw no symptoms of its abatement. The means they had used were ineffectual. They had provisions, but through fear of death they did not use the supports of life. Groundless hopes are often succeeded by desponding fears; but when sinners give up all hope of saving themselves, they are prepared to understand God's word, and to trust in his mercy through Jesus Christ.

14. The euroclydon was a tempestuous east wind; such are common in the Mediterranean, and are now called Levanters.

16. It is still customary in the Mediterranean for vessels to tow their boats, which are seldom taken on board.

17. Seamen even now have recourse to this method of securing a ship, by fastening cables round it. Several passages in ancient authors, show that it was common in those times; and also to cast anchors from the stern, ver. 29.

Ver. 21—29. *Paul receives a Divine assurance of safety.*

Paul gave encouragement, by assuring the crew and passengers, in the name of God, that their lives should be saved, when in human appearance, all hope was taken away. Paul now undertook to be their counsellor and their comforter. Harm and loss in the world, if sanctified to us, may be truly said to be gain; for if they wean us from present things, and awaken us to think of a future state, we are truly gainers by them. They did not hearken to Paul when he warned them of their danger; yet if they acknowledge their folly, and repent of it, he will speak comfort and relief to them, now they are in danger. So compassionate is God to those that are in misery, though they bring themselves into it by their own want of thought, nay by their own wilfulness and contempt of admonition. Paul makes them sensible of their sin in not hearkening to him. Most people bring themselves into inconvenience, because they do not know when they are well off; they gain harm and loss by aiming, often against advice, to mend themselves. He assures them that though the ship would be lost, yet none of them should lose their lives. Thus we say to sinners who are convinced of their sin and folly, and begin to see and bewail their error: Though you would not take our advice when we said, Do not presume, yet take it now when we say, Do not despair. Paul quickens them to work for their safety.

But their ship shall be wrecked. Many a stately, strong, rich, gallant ship, is lost in the mighty waters in a little time; for vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. But not a life shall be lost. This would be good news to those whose guilty consciences made death look terrible. Paul has Divine revelation for this assurance, and is as confident of it as that God is true, being fully satisfied that he has his word for it.

Observe here the solemn profession Paul makes of relation to God; It is he, whose I am, and whom I serve. He looks upon God as his rightful Owner. His we are by creation, for he made us; by preservation, for he maintains us; by redemption, for he bought us. As his sovereign Ruler and Master, who, having given him being, has a right to give him law. Whom I serve, Because His we are, therefore we are bound to serve him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his work. Paul gives an account of the vision he had. God's angel knew where to find them, though they knew not where they were. No storms or tempests can hinder the communications of God's favour to his people, for he is a Help always at hand.

As Paul had before been assured of bearing testimony to Christ at Rome, we may suppose that he had been composed during the whole tempest, but the Lord was pleased to send him further assurances. He is forbidden to fear. If we can truly say, His I am, and Him I serve, the whole scripture says unto us, "Fear not." Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but let not the saints be afraid, no not at sea, in a storm; for the Lord of hosts is with them. He is assured that he shall come safe to Rome. It is comfortable to the faithful servants of God in straits and difficulties, that as long as God has any work for them to do, their lives shall be prolonged. For his sake all in the ship with him should be delivered. God spares them in answer to his prayers or for his sake. Sometimes good men deliver neither sons nor daughters, but their own souls only, Ezek. 14. 18. But Paul here delivers a whole ship's crew, almost three hundred souls. Christ's people are hated and persecuted in the world, as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet it is for their sakes the world stands. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into bad company, he might justly



have been cast away with them; but God calling him into it they are preserved with him. They are given thee; there is no greater satisfaction to a good man than to know he is a public blessing.

He comforts them with the same comforts wherewith he himself was comforted. God is ever faithful, and therefore let all that have an interest in his promise be ever cheerful. If, with God, saying and doing be not two things, then with us believing and enjoying should not. Paul gives them a sign, telling them particularly in what this tempestuous voyage would issue. The pilot had quitted his post, the ship was left to run at random, they knew not where they were, much less how to steer their course, yet Providence undertakes to bring them to an island which shall be a refuge for them. When the church of God, like this ship, is tossed with tempests, and not comforted, God can bring her safely to shore, and will do it.

They had been a full fortnight in the storm, expecting death. They were driven up and down in Adria, a part of the Mediterranean; but knew not in what part they were. About midnight the mariners thought that they drew near to some shore; they cast anchor, and wished for the day. When they had light, there was no land to be seen; now that there was land near them, they had no light. When those who fear God, walk in darkness, and have no light, yet let them not say, The Lord has forsaken us, or, Our God has forgotten us; but let them do as these mariners did, cast anchor, and wish for the day, and be assured that the day will dawn. Hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil. Hold fast by that, think not of putting to sea again, but abide by Christ, and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away. It is indeed an unspeakable favour when those in distress have some one with them, to direct them to the true foundation of hope and source of comfort.

Ver. 30—38. *Paul encourages those with him.*

The treacherous seamen are like the treacherous shepherd, who flees when he sees the danger coming, and there is most need of his help, John 10. 12. Let us cease from man. Paul had in God's name assured them that they should come safe to land, but they will rather trust

their own refuge of lies than God's word of truth. Paul gave notice to the centurion and the soldiers, and told them plainly, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. The greatest difficulty was before them, the shipmen are now more necessary than ever. When God has done that for us which we could not do, we must in his strength help ourselves. Paul, when he says, Ye cannot be saved except these abide in the ship, does not weaken the assurances he had given, that they should infallibly be saved. God, who appointed the end, that they should be saved, appointed the means, that they should be saved by the help of these shipmen. Duty is ours, events are God's; we do not trust God, but tempt him, when we say we put ourselves under his protection, and do not use proper means, such as are within our power, for our preservation.

Observe, the soldiers did not charge Paul with inconsistency in giving this advice, but directly took the proper measures to prevent the mariners from leaving them. And now the shipmen are forced to work for the safety of the ship, because if the rest perish they must perish with them. How selfish are men in general, often even disposed to seek their own safety by the destruction of others! Nor will any perils overcome human depravity, but those who experienced most hardship and danger should be especially ready for death, and particularly observant of truth, humanity, and piety.

Happy those who have such a one as Paul in their company, who not only had correspondence with Heaven, but was of an enlivening spirit to those about him. A friend in distress, when without are fightings, and within are fears, is a friend indeed. He reproved them for their neglect of themselves, that they had so far given way to fear and despair as to forget or not to mind their food. Not that they had continued fourteen days without any food, but they had not had any regular meal. A very disconsolate state is thus expressed, Ps. 102. 4. I forget to eat my bread. If this arise from the sorrow of the world, and from inordinate fear or trouble, it is another sin, it is discontent, it is distrust of God, it is all wrong. And thus the sorrow of the world works death, while joy in God is life and peace in the greatest distresses and dangers.

He said, Wherefore I pray you to take

some meat—We have a hard struggle before us; if our bodies are weak through fasting, we shall not be able to help ourselves. Weak and trembling christians, who give way to doubts and fears about their spiritual state, continue fasting from the Lord's supper, and fasting from Divine consolations, and then complain they cannot go on in their spiritual work and warfare—if they would feed and feast as they ought, upon the provision Christ has made for them, they would be strengthened, and it would be for their souls' health and salvation. Paul assures them of their preservation; There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. It is a proverbial expression, denoting complete security.

The comfort of God's promises can only be appropriated by a believing dependence on him, to fulfil his word to us; and the salvation he reveals must be waited for in attendance on the means he appoints. If God has chosen us to salvation, he has also appointed that we shall obtain it by repentance, faith, prayer, and persevering obedience; it is fatal presumption to expect it any other way.

When Paul had thus spoken he took bread. He gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. We must in every thing give thanks; and must particularly have regard to God in receiving our food, for it is sanctified to us by the word of God and prayer, and is to be received with thanksgiving. Thus the curse is taken off from it, and we obtain a covenant right to it, and a covenant blessing upon it, 1 Tim. 4. 3, 5.

When he had given thanks, he brake the bread, and he began to eat; whether they would be encouraged or not, he would eat his meat and be thankful. Those that teach others are inexcusable, if they do not themselves as they teach, and the most effectual way of preaching is by example. It had a happy influence upon them all. They ventured to believe the message God sent them by Paul, when they plainly perceived that Paul believed it himself, who was in the same danger with them. Thus God sends good tidings to the perishing world of mankind, by those who are of themselves, and in the same common danger with themselves, who are sinners also, and must be saved, if ever they are saved, in the same way in which they persuade others to venture. It is encouragement to people to commit

themselves to Christ as their Saviour, when those who invite them, clearly show that they do so themselves. They once more lightened the ship; they throw overboard the provisions they had. See what good reason our Saviour had to call our bodily food meat that perishes! We may ourselves be under the necessity of throwing that away to save our lives, which we had gathered and laid up for the support of our lives.

Ver. 39—44. *Paul shipwrecked.*

When it was day they knew not what country was in sight, nor whether the inhabitants were friends or foes, but they determined to cast themselves upon their mercy: it was dry land.

The original words here used are hard to accommodate to the modern terms; and we may be content to know that when they saw the shore they hastened to it. And should not a poor soul that has long been struggling with winds and tempests in this world, long to put in to the safe and quiet haven of everlasting rest? Should it not get clear from all which fastens it to this earth, and straitens the outgoings of its pious and devout affections heavenward? And should it not hoist up the sails of faith to the wind of the Spirit, and so with longing desires make to the shore?

They ran the ship aground on a shelf or bed of sand, washed with the sea on both sides, therefore two seas are said to meet upon it; there the fore part stuck fast, and the hinder part would soon be broken, of course, by the violence of the waves. The ship that had weathered the storm in the vast ocean, where it had room, is dashed to pieces when it sticks fast. Thus if the heart fixes in the world, in love and affection, and adherence to it, it is lost! Satan's temptations beat against it, and it is gone; but as long as it keeps above the world, though tossed with its cares and tumults, there is hope for it. They had the shore in view, yet suffered shipwreck in the harbour; thus we are taught never to be secure! In this critical moment the soldiers advised to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. The centurion, for Paul's sake, forbade this. As God had saved all in the ship for Paul's sake, so the centurion saves all the prisoners for his sake; such a diffusive good is a good man. Through the good providence of God they all escaped to land. Here

was an instance of the performance of a particular word of promise which God gave, that all the persons in this ship should be saved for Paul's sake. Though there is great difficulty in the way of the promised salvation, it shall, without fail, be accomplished. Even the wreck of the ship may furnish means for saving the lives; and when all seems gone, all proves to be safe; though on boards, and broken pieces of the ship. It will come to pass that by some means or other, all believers will get safely to heaven.

Lord Jesus, thou hast assured us that none of thine shall perish! Thou wilt bring them all safe to the heavenly shore. And what a pleasing landing will that be! Not among foreigners or strangers, but among our dear friends, who have gone before us to those blest abodes. There thou wilt manifest thyself to them, and make them partakers of thy glory. Thou wilt present them to thy Father, and give thy Holy Spirit the full possession of them for ever.—(83.)

44. It was usual for great ships to have two large broad oars fixed at the head and stern. The bands were fastenings by which these were raised out of the water, and secured in a storm; when the vessel could be steered, the bands being loosed, the rudders would fall down into their place. It may be observed here that acquaintance with the ships and the mode of navigation in the east at the present day throws considerable light upon the account of Paul's voyage as narrated by Luke, and gives strong evidence to the accuracy of the details as recorded by him. St. Paul's bay, in the island of Malta, is pointed out as the scene of this shipwreck, and the principal features of the place answer to the description. It is a bay with a convenient shore for landing, which is distinctly seen from some distance, while the greater part of the island is wholly inaccessible. And on one side of it a tongue of land, or rather of rocks, extends considerably into the sea, and is, of course, washed by the waves on each side.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1—10. *Paul kindly received at Melita.*

Here we have the kind reception which the inhabitants of Malta gave to the distressed strangers shipwrecked on their coast; God can make strangers to be friends, friends in adversity. Those who are despised for their homely manners, often are more friendly than their more polished neighbours; and the conduct of heathens, or persons called barbarians, condemns many persons in civilized nations, professing to be christians, who steal the property, and even hurt the persons shipwrecked on their shores. The

inhabitants were called barbarians, because not of Greek or Roman extraction, but their reception of Paul and his distressed company, showed kindness.

The apostle readily accommodated himself to circumstances. He assisted in making a fire, but in doing this he was in greater danger than what he had just escaped from. The poison of the viper is fatal, and this, which was concealed among the sticks, being irritated by the heat, it might be expected, would immediately bite Paul.

The people concluded Paul was a murderer, and that this viper was sent by Divine justice, to be the avenger of blood. In this we may see some discoveries of natural light. 1. They knew naturally that there is a God who governs the world, whose providence presides in all occurrences, so that things do not come to pass by chance, no, not such a thing as this, but by Divine direction; and that evil pursues sinners; that there are good works which God will reward, and wicked works which he will punish. 2. Also that murder is a heinous crime, and which shall not long go unpunished. We see some of the mistakes of natural light, which needed to be rectified by Divine revelation. 3. As that they thought all wicked people are punished in this life. Though some are made examples in this world, to prove that there is a God and a Providence, yet many are left unpunished, to prove that there is a judgment to come. 4. Also that they thought all who were remarkably afflicted in this life were wicked people. Divine revelation sets this matter in a true light—that all things come ordinarily alike to all; and that good men often are greatly afflicted in this life, for the exercise and improvement of their faith and patience.

Again observe Paul's deliverance from the danger, and the undue construction the people put upon that. The viper's fastening on his hand was a trial of his faith. It does not appear that it put him into confusion. He suffered it to hang on so long, that the people had time to take notice of it. Such presence of mind he had, and such composure, as no man could have upon such a sudden accident, but by Divine grace, and the actual belief and consideration of the word of Christ concerning his disciples, Mark 16. 18. This it is to have the heart fixed, trusting in God. He shook the viper into the fire.

without any means used to loosen its hold. Thus in the strength of the grace of Christ, believers shake off the temptations of Satan, with holy resolution. When we despise censures and reproaches of men, and look upon them with holy contempt, having the testimony of conscience for us, then, as Paul, we shake off the viper into the fire. It does us no harm, except we are deterred by it from our duty.

Those who thought it would have been his death looked a great while, but saw no harm at all come to him. God hereby made Paul remarkable among these people, and so made way for the reception of the gospel among them. They then changed their minds, and said that he was a god; for they thought it impossible that a mortal man should have a viper hang on his hand so long, and not be the worse for it. See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how apt it is to run into extremes both ways.

Publius, the chief man of the island, gave kind entertainment to these distressed strangers. His father was very ill, but Paul took cognizance of his case, as an apostle to heal him by miracle; and he prayed to God, in Christ's name, for his cure. Many others were invited by this cure to apply themselves to Paul. We have reason to think, that with these cures he preached the gospel to them, and with considerable success. The whole company was respected on Paul's account, and all their wants were liberally supplied when they departed. The Lord raises up friends for his people in every place whither he leads them, and renders them blessings to those connected with them. And having reaped of their spiritual things, it was but just they should make them those returns, 1 Cor. 9. 11.

1. Some writers have supposed that this island was not the Melita or Malta to the south of Sicily, but an island of that name on the coast of Illyria. This, however, appears to be a mistake, from not considering that the name of Adria formerly was not confined to the Adriatic sea now so called, but extended to the part of the Mediterranean sea between Greece, Italy, and Africa. Also it should be remembered that the euroclydon blows from the east.

3. The expression here used signifies that Paul was bitten by the viper; but he was miraculously preserved from any ill effects. Ver. 6 describes the usual effects of the poison.

Ver. 11-16. *Paul arrives at Rome.*

We have here the progress of Paul's voyage towards Rome, and his arrival there. They proceeded in a ship of Alexandria. Its sign was Castor and Pollux,

two pagan demigods. They touched first at Syracuse. From thence they came to Rhegium, a city in Italy; then to Puteoli; there Paul and the rest who were bound for Rome, were put ashore, and went the remainder of their way by land. At Puteoli they found brethren, Christians. The ordinary details of travelling are seldom worth recital; but the comfort of communion with the saints, and kindness shown by friends, deserve particular mention.

The Christians at Rome went to meet Paul. They were so far from being ashamed of him, or afraid of owning him, because he was a prisoner, that they were the more careful to show him respect. Paul had great comfort in this. He thanked God: we may suppose he thanked them; but that was not all, he thanked God. If our friends are kind to us, it is God who puts it into their hearts, and we must give him the glory. When we see those even in strange places, who bear Christ's name, fear God, and serve him, we should lift up our hearts to heaven in thanksgiving; blessed be God that there are so many excellent ones on this earth. He took courage, and entered Rome a prisoner, as cheerfully as he had entered Jerusalem at liberty. Yet it is observable, that though the Christians at Rome were now so respectful to Paul, they failed him when he most needed them; for he says, 2 Tim. 4. 16, At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. They could willingly go forty or fifty miles to meet Paul, but to venture the displeasure of the emperor, and other great men, by appearing in defence of Paul, they desired to be excused; an intimation to us to cease from man, and to encourage ourselves in God. The courage we take from his promises will never fail us, when we shall be ashamed of that which we took from men's compliments.

How many great men have made their entry into Rome, crowned and in triumph, who really were the plagues of their generation! But here a good man makes his entry into Rome, chained as a poor captive, who was really the greatest blessing to his generation. Is not this enough to put us for ever out of conceit with this world? Yet he has some favour showed him; though a close prisoner, Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, and a soldier was appointed to be his guard. This may encourage God's prisoners, that he can give them favour in the eyes of those

that carry them captives. When God does not deliver his people presently out of bondage, yet if he either makes it easy to them, or them easy under it, they have reason to be thankful.

11. The ancient vessels had images at the head and stern. The one on the head was called the *signu*, from which the vessel was named, and the other was the deity to whose care it was committed; sometimes both were alike. Castor and Pollux were demigods considered to be favourable to mariners, and especially ready to succour them in cases of shipwreck.

13. Puteoli was the port where the corn ships from Egypt were accustomed to unload.

15. The three tabernæ may have been inns, but probably were shops for the sale of provisions to travellers.

16. It was the Roman custom for persons thus kept in confinement, to be chained by the hand to the soldier who was their guard.

The prætorian prefect, to whose care prisoners brought to Rome were committed, at this time, was Afanius Burrhus who assisted in raising Nero to the imperial dignity, but was put to death by that tyrant. Burrhus is stated to have been a mild and just man, which view is supported by his moderate treatment of the apostle. He held his office alone, but both before and after him it was held jointly by two persons.

Ver. 17-22. *Paul's conference with the Jews at Rome.*

Paul is brought a prisoner to Rome, but when he is come, nobody appears to lay any thing to his charge; and here he represents it to the chief of the Jews at Rome, to satisfy them that he had no resentment against his nation, nor any purpose to accuse them. He professes his own innocence. Paul did not impose the customs of the fathers upon the Gentiles, they were never intended for them; but he never opposed them in the Jews. He notices the hard usage he had met with, but does not dwell upon it. He declares the judgment of the Roman governors concerning him. It was for the honour of Paul that those who most carefully examined his case, acquitted him. He pleads the necessity he was under to remove himself and his cause to Rome. In his appeal he aimed not to accuse his nation, but only to vindicate himself. He gives such an account of the cause of his sufferings as should engage them to do what they could on his behalf, saying, Because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. He probably was chained to the soldier that kept him. It was, 1. Because he preached that the Messiah was come, whom Israel hoped for. 2. Because he preached that the resurrection of the dead would come; that also was the hope of Israel. This would lead

to the genuine sense of all the promises made to the fathers, a spiritual kingdom of holiness and love set up in the hearts of men, to be the pledge of, and preparative for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

They own, 1. That they had nothing to say in particular against him, nor had any instructions to appear as his prosecutors before the emperor, either by letter or word of mouth. Paul now found he had gained the point he aimed at, in appealing to Cesar, which was to remove his cause into a court to which the Jews durst not follow it. 2. That they desired to know more particularly concerning the doctrine he preached, and the religion he took so much pains to propagate, in the face of so much opposition. They looked upon it to be a sect, and that was false. True christianity establishes what is of common concern to all mankind, and is not built upon narrow opinions and private interests. It aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, but all its gains are spiritual and eternal. They said it was every where spoken against, and that was too true. It is, and always has been the lot of Christ's holy religion, to be every where spoken against. But though real christians are spoken against as a troublesome or fanatical sect, we may so behave that none can speak harm of us.

Is there at this time, or has there been at any period, from the apostles' days even to the present hour, any thing but hatred shown by the great mass of those to whom the gospel comes? Look through every town and village where Christ is exalted as the only Saviour of mankind, and where the people are called to follow him in newness of life, and say whether those who give themselves up to Christ, are not still called a sect, a party, and names of reproach used to designate them? And this is the treatment they are sure to receive, so long as there shall continue an ungodly man upon earth.—(61.)

Ver. 23-31. *Paul preaches to the Jews at Rome, and abides there a prisoner at large.*

Paul persuaded the Jews concerning Jesus. The design and tendency of his whole discourse were to bring them to Christ, to convince them of his being the Messiah, and to engage them to believe in him as he is offered in the gospel. The apostle proceeded with the Jews in his hired house as he had done in the synagogues, explaining the nature and privileges of

the Redeemer's kingdom and salvation ; testifying to the facts connected with its introduction, and reasoning with them from the scriptures, to prove Him to be the promised Messiah. Thus he employed the whole day. Some were won over to the faith, yet most of them seem to have rejected his testimony, and to have disputed against those who believed. Such has always been the effect of the gospel ; to some it has been a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some are wrought upon by the word, and others hardened ; some receive the light, and others shut their eyes against it. Paul parted with them, observing that the Holy Ghost had well described their disposition, and had awfully denounced their doom by the prophet Isaiah.

How should they be happy, who will not be healed of a disease that makes them miserable ? and how should they be healed who will not be converted to the use of the methods of cure ? and how should they be converted who will not be convinced either of their disease or of their remedy ? and how should they be convinced who shut their eyes and stop their ears ? Let all that hear the gospel, and do not heed it, tremble at this doom ; for who shall heal them, if God does not ?

The apostle had observed, during the whole of his ministry, that the nation in general thus closed their eyes and ears to the truth ; and he foresaw, with great concern, that God was about to give them up to judicial blindness, and hardness of heart for their sins. However, he would assure them, that the Gentiles, to whom the salvation of God was sent by him, would hear and obey his word.

The Jews had afterwards much reasoning among themselves. Many have great reasoning, who do not reason aright. They can find fault with one another's opinions, yet not yield to truth. Nor will men's reasoning among themselves convince them, without the grace of God to open their understandings. While we mourn on account of such despisers, we should rejoice that the salvation of God is sent to others, who will receive it ; and if we are of that number, we should indeed be thankful to Him who hath made us to differ.

We here take leave of the history of blessed Paul.

1. It cannot but be a trouble to us, that we leave him in bonds for Christ. Two years he was a prisoner under Felix ; and

beside all the time which passed between that and his coming to Rome, he is two years more a prisoner under Nero. How many churches might Paul have planted, how many cities and nations might he have brought over to Christ, in these five years' time, for so much it was at least, if he had been at liberty ! But God is wise, and will show that he can and does carry on his own interest, both without the services, and by the sufferings of the most useful instruments he employs. Even Paul's bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. 1. 12, 14. Yet even Paul's imprisonment was in some respects a kindness to him. He had been accustomed to be always upon the remove, but now he lived for two years in the same house ; so that the bringing of him into this prison, was like Christ's call to his disciples to come into a desert place, and rest awhile. When he was at liberty, he was in continual fear, by reason of the lying in wait of the Jews, but now his prison was his castle.

2. Yet it is a pleasure, that though we leave him in bonds for Christ, yet we leave him at work for Christ, and this made his bonds easy, that he was not by them bound from serving God and doing good. His hands are tied, but, thanks be to God, his mouth is not stopped : a faithful zealous minister can better bear any hardship than being silenced. Here is Paul a prisoner, yet a preacher ; he is bound, but the word of the Lord is not bound. He preached to all that would hear him, whether Jews or Gentiles. He received all that came to him ; was not afraid of the greatest, nor ashamed of the meanest. And he might hope the better to speed, because they came unto him, which supposed willingness to learn.

He preached not curious speculations, nor politics. Paul kept to his principle—to know and preach nothing but Christ, and him crucified. Ministers, when tempted in their preaching to divert from their main business, should bring themselves back with this question, What does this concern the Lord Jesus ? What tendency has it to bring us to him, and to keep us walking in him ? The apostle preached not himself, but Christ, 2 Cor. 4. 5.

Divine grace gave Paul liberty of spirit ; he preached with all confidence, well assured of the truth of what he preached, and the worth of it. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Divine Providence gave him liberty of speech ; no man lay-

ing any restraint upon him. The Jews who used to forbid him to speak to the Gentiles, had no authority here; and the Roman government as yet took no cognizance of the profession of christianity as a crime. Thus God makes the wrath of men to praise him, and restrains the remainder of it, Ps. 76. 10. Though many had it in their power to forbid Paul's preaching, yet God so ordered it, that no man did forbid him. See God here providing comfort for the relief of the persecuted. Though Paul was here placed in a very narrow sphere of opportunity, he was not molested or disturbed in it. Though it was not a wide door that was opened to him, yet it was kept open, and no man was suffered to shut it; and it was to many an effectual door, so that there were saints even in Nero's household, Phil. 4. 22. When the city of our solemnities is thus made a quiet habitation, and we are fed from day to day with the bread of life, no man forbidding us, we must give thanks to God, and prepare for changes; still longing for that holy mountain, in which there never shall be any pricking brier or grieving thorn.

We learn also from Phil. 1. 13, how God overruled Paul's imprisonment for the furtherance of the gospel. And not the residents at Rome only, but all the church of Christ, to the present day, and in the most remote corner of the globe, have abundant reason to bless God for the dispensation which, during the most matured period of St. Paul's christian life and experience, detained him a close prisoner in the imperial city. It was from his prison, probably chained hand to hand to the soldier who kept him, that the apostle indited those inestimable productions, the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews; epistles evidencing, perhaps more than any others, the christian love with which his heart overflowed, the christian experience with which his soul was imbued.—(8.)

Thus the apostle laboured at Rome incessantly to establish the kingdom of God. May those whom curiosity, ambition, and other worldly desires draw to the same place, detain, or wholly employ there, be covered with a salutary shame and confusion by considering the apostle's example.—(94.)

After two years the apostle was liberated. He revisited the churches he had planted, and returned to Rome to finish

his glorious work in that city. There, by command of the tyrant Nero, he was headed for the testimony of Jesus. Deeply interesting would it have been, could we learn the particulars of his latter hours. But we have a remarkable testimony to his dying experience in his second epistle to Timothy, written during this last imprisonment. We there find him writing, "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He continues, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Blessed testimony, that the truths which it had been the great object of his life to set forth, could sustain and comfort him in the immediate prospect of death! While in the midst of active usefulness, Paul doubtless had all the conflict of the struggle, and even the infirmities and misgivings which God, in mercy, strews upon the path, even of his dearest children. He had the thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. He had the transitory fear, lest when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway, that he might strive the more earnestly to keep under his body, and to bring it into subjection. But these passed away; he had always believed, but he was then "persuaded," that all would be well with him for eternity.

Less of triumph, less of ecstasy, may be reserved for the believer of the present day, but if we are fighting in the ranks of the same Saviour, not less of security and peace. The compassionate Redeemer is with the weakest member of his church, ready, when his strength fails, to bear him in his arms, and to make even the weakest and the feeblest more than conquerors. Let us then seek to live more and more in the love of the Saviour; to labour to glorify Him by every action of our lives, and we shall assuredly, by his strength, be among the number of those who now overcome; and by his free grace and mercy, be hereafter among the blessed company who shall sit down with Him upon his throne, even as He also has overcome, and has set down on His Father's throne, at God's right hand, for evermore.—(8.)

# DATES OF EVENTS RECORDED IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,

## CONTINUED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

Some slight differences of opinion exist as to the dates of this period. The following Table shows the views of three recent and able writers, who have given considerable attention to this intricate subject. They vary in some respects from the dates usually printed with bibles, and thus clear up a few difficulties in the narrative, but no point of a doctrinal nature is at all concerned.

	<i>Townsend.</i>	<i>Hales.</i>	<i>Greswell.</i>
Descent of the Holy Ghost..... A. D.	29	31	30
Peter and John imprisoned .....	30	32	32
Ananias and Sapphira struck dead .....	31	32	
Stephen stoned. First persecution .....	34	34	37
Philip baptizes the Ethiopian .....	34	34	37
Conversion of Saul, who goes to Arabia.....	35	35	37
Pilate deposed from the government of Judea .....		35	36
Tiberius succeeded by Caligula .....	37	36	
Peter cures Eneas and raises Tabitha .....	38	40	
Saul returned to Damascus .....	38	38	38
Caligula succeeded by Claudius.....	41	40	41
Conversion of Cornelius .....	40	41	41
Saul visits Jerusalem and proceeds to Cilicia .....	39	38	41
Herod Agrippa made King of Judea.....	42	41	41
Saul at Antioch, (ch. 11. 26).....	42	43	41
Disciples first called christians at Antioch.....	43	43	
Herod puts James to death .....	43	44	43
Awful death of Herod.....	44	44	43
Famine foretold by Agabus.....	44	44	43
Saul again at Jerusalem.....	45	45	43
Saul and Barnabas sent forth to preach to the Gentiles....	45	45	44
Paul at Cyprus.....	45	45	44
Paul visits Iconium, Lystra, &c.....	47	46	45
Resides at Antioch till .....	49	49	49
Attends the council at Jerusalem.....	49	49	48
Visits the churches and arrives at Trous.....	50	50	49
Visits Macedonia and Greece.....	51	51	50
Paul at Athens.....	51	51	50
Resides at Corinth till.....	53	53	52
Felix appointed governor of Judea .....	53	52	
Paul visits Jerusalem, and returns to Antioch .....	55	54	52
Claudius succeeded by Nero .....	54	54	54
Paul at Ephesus; tumult there .....	57	58	55
Visits Macedonia .....	57	59	55
Paul arrives at Jerusalem .....	58	59	56
Imprisoned at Cesarea .....	58	59	56
Festus appointed governor of Judea.....	60	61	
Paul's defence before Agrippa .....	60	61	58
Paul arrives at Rome.....	60	61	59
Leaves Italy in .....	62	64	61
It is supposed that Paul then visited various countries, } and was again a prisoner at Rome..... }	65	64	66
Paul beheaded at Rome, (some date this A. D. 68).....	66	65	66
Nero kills himself, and is succeeded by Galba .....	68	68	68
Vespasian becomes emperor .....	69	69	69
Jerusalem destroyed by Titus.....	70	70	70



## GENERAL NOTES.

### THE TEMPLE, AND ITS COURTS.

THE Temple at Jerusalem stood on Mount Moriah, on the ground David purchased of Araunah the Jebusite. The first temple was built by Solomon in seven years, and finished *B. C.* 1004. It is described in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and was destroyed by the Chaldeans, *B. C.* 588.

The second temple was built on the same site by Zerubbabel, but far inferior in every respect: see *Ezra* 3. 12. It was profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes, *B. C.* 163, and was purified and repaired by Judas Maccabæus three years after.

The Jewish writers note five things which had been in the first temple, but were wanting in the second. 1. The ark. 2. The shechinah, or manifestation of the Divine presence. 3. The sacred fire kindled from heaven. 4. The urim and thummim. 5. The spirit of prophecy. This latter, however, was not wanting: Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi, may all be accounted prophets of the second temple; the effusions of the Spirit on Zacharias, Simeon, and Anna, may also be enumerated, but especially the presence of our blessed Lord himself, whereby the latter house excelled the first in glory, as foretold by Haggai, 2. 9.

After the lapse of five centuries from its erection, this temple had become much decayed, when Herod the Great, some years before the birth of our Saviour, undertook to repair, or rather gradually to rebuild it. For nine years, many thousand workmen were employed, and no cost was spared to render it most magnificent. Josephus speaks in the strongest terms of its curious structure and beauty. The Jews continued to enlarge and ornament the temple long after Herod's death, so that in fact it had been forty and six years in building, before the time our Saviour spoke respecting it, *John* 2. 20.

When the great body of workmen were discharged, on the completion of these works, for want of employment, they began those tumults and seditions which ended in the destruction of the city, the temple, and the Jewish polity.

Besides the sanctuary, the temple contained numerous courts and piles of buildings, appropriated to a variety of pur-

poses. To this vast number of apartments our Lord is supposed to allude, *John* 1. 42, where he speaks of the many mansions in heaven. In speaking of the events which occurred in the temple, these courts and apartments are mentioned under the general denomination of, the temple.

The second temple being erected on the same site as the first, was situated on a very hard rock, mostly encompassed by steep precipices. A part of the foundation was a wall of very large stones, raised from the valley beneath, to a height of 450 feet, and in some places as much as 700. The temple, strictly so called, consisting only of the portico, the sanctuary, and the holy of holies, was but a small pile, surrounded by courts, making in the whole a square of about half a mile in circumference, or forming an area of about nineteen acres, according to others. The outer enclosure was entered by eight gates; the whole pile of building in each of these gates, according to Josephus, was about fifty feet high, and eighteen wide, including the towers over the gateways. There were also buildings adjoining to all the gates. The gate called The Beautiful Gate, *Acts* 3. 2, led from the outer to the inner courts. It was very splendid, and composed of Corinthian brass, the most valuable metallic composition in ancient times.

The first, or outer court, was the court of the Gentiles, beyond which strangers were not allowed to pass. It was enclosed by a wall more than forty feet high, and surrounded on the inside by spacious porticoes or cloisters; above which were galleries or apartments, supported by marble pillars. One of these ranges was called Solomon's porch or piazza, because it stood on the terrace that monarch built up from the valley beneath, as already mentioned, to enlarge the area of the mountain. This terrace was the only work of Solomon in the second temple, and therefore retained the name of that prince; see *John* 10. 23, *Acts* 3. 11. The south-east corner of the roof is supposed to have been the place from whence Satan endeavoured to persuade our Lord to cast himself down: see *Matt.* 4. 5. In this court, assigned to Gentile proselytes, the Jews, who did not worship in it them-

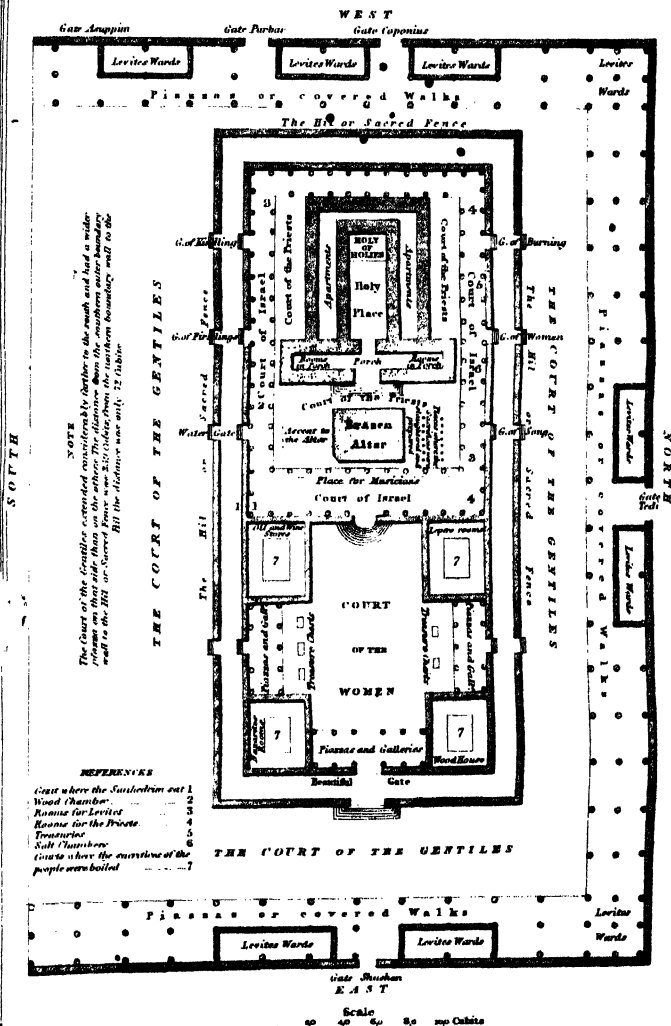


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# THE TEMPLE

AS IT WAS BY HEROD, AND AS IT APPEARED IN THE TIME OF  
OUR SAVIOUR





selves, allowed the money changers, and sellers of animals for sacrifices, to take their stations; but our Lord drove them from thence, telling them that the temple was a house of prayer for all nations, and they had made it a den of thieves, thus plainly indicating the spirit in which the traffic was conducted.

The scriptures often refer to the temple as the house of God, and we must not forget that in the passage just quoted, our blessed Lord speaks of it as his Father's house, John 2. 16. He is supposed to do the same in Luke 2. 49. The latter is not obvious to the English reader, but the original is: "I must be at my Father's;" and though the expression may refer to "an employment," yet "a dwelling" is most suitable, both to the construction of the original, and to the general sense of the passage. We know that Jehovah dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but this building, appointed to be a house of prayer for all nations, might emphatically be called the house of God, which should not be forgotten in describing the temple.

The beautiful effect of the ranges of white marble pillars in the piazzas of the outer court, is described by Josephus, who says, "Their effect was incredible to those who never saw them, and an amazement to those who did. Each pillar was six cubits in diameter, and the width of the cloisters, or covered walk, was thirty cubits on three sides, but on the southern it was more than seventy cubits." A cubit was about twenty-one inches. The roof of part of these cloisters was destroyed by the Romans, in a commotion which took place soon after the death of Herod the Great, but it was repaired before the commencement of our Lord's ministry.

The inner courts were divided from the court of the Gentiles by a space or terrace, called the Hil, or sacred fence, ten cubits wide, alluded to in the epistle to the Ephesians, 2. 13, 14. The outer wall of this was a fence or lattice work, three cubits high. The natural rock rising higher than in the outer court, the floor of this space was six cubits above that of the court of the Gentiles; the ascent to the Hil was by twelve steps.

There were five steps, each half a cubit, from the terrace to the next court, called the court of the women, as females were not allowed to go further. It is designated by that name in Jewish writers,

but in the scriptures it is called the new court, 2 Chron. 20. 5; the outer court, Ezek. 46. 21; and the treasury, John 8. 20. The Beautiful Gate was on the east side of this enclosure. There were also nine other gates from the terrace or Hil, to the courts within it; they were richly adorned with gold and silver. This court was 135 cubits square, containing about an acre and a quarter. In each corner was a smaller court, with buildings, and the spaces between them were occupied on three sides by piazzas, with galleries above, where the women stood, divided into ranges or stories, the number of which is not mentioned, while the men stood on the area below.

Next was the court of Israel. This was fifteen steps, or seven cubits and a half higher than the court of the women, and it was enclosed by a wall, twenty-five cubits high on the inside. The principal entrance was by the gate Nicanor, under a stately tower. The gate itself was forty cubits in height, and so very heavy as to require twenty men to open and shut it. Among the prodigies before the destruction of Jerusalem, it is recorded that this gate was opened by some invisible power. The court of Israel, properly so called, appears only to have been a narrow space or piazza, eight cubits broad, the line of separation between this and the inner space, called the court of the priests, being marked by the pillars which supported the roof, and by a railing between the pillars, called the ranges, 2 Kings 11. 8, 15. Here the Israelites stood while their sacrifices were burning on the altar. In this court, and in that called the court of the women, the people were praying while Zacharias burned incense in the sanctuary, Luke 1. 10: and on such occasions, especially on the sabbaths, the number of persons present was very great.

The court of the priests was within that of Israel, and enclosed thereby as a picture by a frame. Its floor was two cubits and a half higher, and was ascended by steps at the east end, which extended the whole width of the court. These steps formed a space eleven cubits broad, which was occupied by the musicians during the public services.

Immediately before the space stood the brazen altar, exactly on the spot where Araunah's threshing floor had been. In Herod's time it was larger than at any

former period, being thirty-two cubits square at the base, and ten high. A cubit at the south-east corner was cut off, showing the line which separated the tribe of Benjamin from that of Judah, that the whole of the altar might be in the former tribe. The priests went up to the altar by a gradual ascent. On the north side of the altar the sacrifices were slain.

Between the altar and the porch was a space of twenty-two cubits, considered peculiarly sacred. It is mentioned Ezek. 8. 16, Joel 2. 17, Matt. 23. 35.

The porch, or portico, as rebuilt by Herod, appears to have been 100 cubits in length, 128 in height, and 22 in breadth, forming a centre, the width of the body of the temple, having two wings. It was entered by an ascent of twelve steps from the court of the priests, extending nearly to the altar. Thus a person at the gates of the porch was twenty-four cubits and a half above the pavement of the court of the Gentiles; an elevation which must have added to the impressive character of the building itself. This gate had no doors, but stood always open, that it might be, as Josephus says, an emblem of heaven. The entrance from the porch to the sanctuary was covered by a veil, or piece of richly wrought tapestry, embroidered with a golden vine laden with grapes. The porch contained the vestibule leading to the sanctuary, and numerous apartments for various purposes.

The ground beneath the temple and its courts was excavated into a number of vaults and caverns; this was principally done lest any dead body should be buried immediately beneath the worshippers, as by passing over a grave, a Jew contracted ceremonial defilement.

The holy place, or sanctuary, was the same length and breadth as that in Solomon's temple, but double the height, which allowed it to be lighted by windows in the upper part of the wall, over the chambers built round the sanctuary on the outside. In the holy place was the sacred furniture, similar to that of the first temple, and the whole was ornamented with much magnificence. The holy of holies was separated by a double veil, very thick and strong, which was rent at the time of our Lord's expiring on the cross. We need not go into details respecting the interior of the sanctuary, or the articles it contained. The height was twice that of Solomon's temple; and the

outer walls, of white marble, are compared by Josephus to a mountain of snow white and glistening, while the gilded roof dazzled the eyes of the spectator, who beheld it when the sun shone upon it. The roof was covered with gilt spikes to prevent birds from settling thereon.

In the construction of the temple, many stones of a prodigious size were used. Josephus describes some forty-five cubits long, five high, and six broad. The reader will remember the words of the disciples, "Master, see what stones (what great stones) and what buildings are here," Mark 13. 1. How improbable our Lord's words, that not one of these stones should be left upon each other, must then have seemed! yet they were literally fulfilled, A. D. 70, in the same month, and on the same day of the month, that Solomon's temple had been destroyed. The superstitious reverence the Jews attached to the temple, is strongly shown by their alleging against our Lord on his trial, the words, he had said, John 2. 19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again;" which they considered as contemptuous, and never forgot or forgave. See Matt. 27. 40; also, Acts 6. 13; 21. 28.

The tower, or castle of Antonia, stood on a steep rock at the north-west corner of the temple. It was built by John Hyrcanus, B. C. 135, on the site of a citadel erected by Antiochus Epiphanes, and used for keeping the sacred vestments and other articles. Herod the Great enlarged and repaired it. Antonia was both a palace and a fortification; a large body of Roman soldiers always was quartered there. It overlooked the two outer courts of the temple, so that it entirely commanded the courts, and had communications with the cloisters by secret passages, as well as by the stairs from which the apostle Paul addressed the multitude, Acts 21. 40. The keep of the castle at Norwich is supposed to have been built similar in form to Antonia.

As many circumstances in the gospel history refer to the temple and its courts, the reader will be interested by having some idea of the wonderful structure. Minute accounts of the several parts, and the uses to which they were applied will be found in *Lightfoot* and other authors; but in many respects they are founded upon conjecture. The various plans of this edifice are drawn from

the descriptions of Josephus and the Talmud, with some particulars recorded in scripture. As these descriptions are obscure in several parts, considerable differences will be observed among them. The annexed plan chiefly follows those of *Lightfoot* and *W. Browne*.

#### THE SYNAGOGUES.

The temple at Jerusalem was especially dedicated to the ceremonial and typical services directed in the law. The synagogues, so called from a word signifying convention or assembly, were buildings for prayer, reading, and hearing the sacred scriptures. The period of their origin is uncertain, but after the time of the Maccabees, they were found in almost every place in Judea, according to its extent, and in foreign countries, wherever the Jews were numerous. A synagogue might be erected in any place where ten persons of respectability and property could be found; and every Jew was required to worship publicly in a synagogue or in the temple. In Jerusalem there were 480 synagogues just before the destruction of that city by the Romans. Each synagogue had a table, whereon the book of the law was spread, on the east side of which was an ark or chest to keep it in. The elders sat before this table, with their faces to the people and their backs to the ark. These places are called in the New Testament, the chief seats in the synagogue. The women sat by themselves in latticed galleries.

The officers of the synagogue, were, 1. The rulers. These often were several in number. They regulated all its concerns, and gave permission to persons to preach. They also possessed considerable authority, and could direct punishments to be inflicted on those whom they deemed rebellious against the law, Matt. 10. 17. 2. A person who offered up prayers for the congregation. He was called the angel or messenger, as he spoke to God for the people. 3. One who had charge of the sacred books.

The law was divided into fifty-three or fifty-four paraschoth or sections, so as to be read over in the year. A like number of portions were selected from the prophetic writings, including a few extracts from the historical books; they were called haphthoreth. These sections were read by the scribes, or such members of the synagogue as were called upon to do

so, and they might add an exposition. This is exemplified in Luke 4. 15, 22. It was also customary, after the reading of the law and the prophets, to invite any strangers of learning, or persons known to be advocates of particular doctrines, and then present, to impart such religious instruction as they wished to communicate. This explains the invitation to the apostles, Acts 13. 14, 15. Sometimes they offered themselves voluntarily, as our Lord seems to have done, Luke 4. 16. It was usual for public instructors to sit down while they delivered their sermons, see Luke 4. Matt. 23. 2, and several other places. The synagogue services were on the sabbath, three times each day. They began with a doxology, then followed a portion from the law, another doxology, and the portion from the prophets. The passages which had been read in Hebrew were rendered by an interpreter into the tongue commonly spoken, and the reader, or some other person, then addressed the people. The meeting ended with a prayer, and a collection was made for the poor. It is supposed that some of the prayers now used, or the substance of them, were in existence in the time of Christ, but the greater part bear evidences that they are of later date. The public services in the synagogues gave considerable facilities to the apostles in their first preaching the gospel, though they were soon excluded from them, and either hired houses or were received by friends, who gave the use of suitable rooms for the purpose, Acts 19. 9; 20. 8.

The *Proseuchas* are supposed by some to have been the smaller synagogues, but it is generally considered that they were only enclosures open at the top, where persons prayed, either separately or together. Frequently they were in fields or lonely places, and by the side of rivers, Acts 16. 13. It is supposed they were often resorted to by our Lord in his midnight prayers.

#### DATES AND OBSERVATIONS RESPECTING SOME PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

The following is a brief statement respecting the supposed dates of some of the principal events recorded in the gospels, with a few observations upon some circumstances connected with the life of our Saviour, derived from *Greswell's* dissertations, and other authorities.

The fact of the shepherds being in the



open air, tending their flocks at night, when the birth of Christ was announced, has long been considered a sufficient proof that this event did not take place in the month of December. It has been placed in every month in the year. Many chronologists consider that it occurred about the time of the autumnal equinox, perhaps on the great day of the atonement. To ascertain the precise period or day, however, it has been well said, "belongs to God alone, not to man." For many reasons it seems probable that the true date of the nativity of Christ is, according to *Greswell*, the tenth of the Jewish month Nisan, which in the year of the world 4000, or B. C. 4, corresponding with the year of Rome 750, would be on Saturday, April 5. At this season the pasturage would be abundant, but not long afterwards, as neither in the middle of summer, nor yet in the depth of winter, would a sufficient supply be found. If our Lord was born in the evening or night, as appears probable from the announcement to the shepherds, then, as the Jewish days began and ended at six in the evening, the nativity would be on "the Lord's day," the day of his glorious resurrection from the dead; if at an earlier hour, it would be on the Jewish sabbath.

With respect to the luminous appearance or star, which induced the magi to visit Jerusalem, probably it first appeared at the incarnation, and again at the nativity; that is thirteen months and four months, before their arrival. This explains the peculiarity of Herod's order, which seems to have included all children under thirteen months. The idea of the star having appeared before the nativity, seems to have been the traditional opinion of the church, and is mentioned by some of the fathers—nor does it preclude the belief that it appeared at the nativity also. Reference to Ezra and other parts of scripture, as well as to heathen writers, show that persons setting out from the countries even beyond the Euphrates, might arrive at Jerusalem in four months. Thus if the wise men began their journey about April 6, they might be at Bethlehem by the first week in August, and supposing that Joseph and Mary, with the child, set out for Egypt a few days after, they would reach that country before September.

Circumstances have been noticed which render it probable that the abode of the

holy family in Egypt was about seven months. In the next year after Christ's birth, the passover would fall on the 31st March, about a fortnight before which time Herod died. With respect to this date a circumstance is recorded by Josephus, who mentions an eclipse of the moon having taken place shortly before the death of Herod, which by calculation is found to have happened March 13, in the year of Rome 750. Some have placed the death of Herod a few days after this eclipse, but *Greswell* considers that the events mentioned in connexion with it, would indicate its having occurred a year before Herod's decease, which from many circumstances he assigns to A. D. 751, or B. C. 4. After the death of Herod, disturbances ensued and compelled his successor Archelaus to employ a military force to disperse the people, when assembled at the usual sacrifices in the temple, which was not effected without considerable bloodshed. The return from Egypt would most likely take place while the unfavourable impression towards Archelaus, excited by this event, was at its height, and before the disturbances were renewed at the ensuing Pentecost, in the month of May, which were more general, and only suppressed by the Roman military force of the province of Syria.

*Greswell* notices several events connected with Jewish history coinciding with the preceding dates, either as to the time of year at which they happened, or the space occupied by them. Among these are, the birth of Isaac, Moses, and Solomon, the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael, the time when Joseph was carried into Egypt, the period the Israelites sojourned in that land, the beginning of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, the preparation of the tabernacle, the return from the Babylonish captivity. Some of these, if not presenting a typical resemblance, certainly exhibit remarkable coincidences. He also enters largely into investigations, showing that these dates correspond with the periods pointed out in the several prophecies of the Old Testament, but he primarily grounds his calculations upon events of those times.

The traditional account of the ancient fathers, as given by *Theophylact*, states that Joseph had four sons and three daughters by a former wife, and that one of the latter, called Salome, was the mother of James and John the evangelist.

Consequently the latter would be accounted the nephew of Jesus.

The visit of Christ to Jerusalem, when twelve years of age, also bears upon the preceding calculation, and is supposed to have taken place in the year A. D. 8, when our Lord had entered his twelfth year, and would be said, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, to be twelve years old. This visit being at the feast of the passover, confirms that the birth of Christ must have taken place in the spring, not in the autumn.

The birth of John the baptist was about six months previous to that of our Saviour, and is assigned to October 5, B. C. 5. His ministry is calculated to have begun at the feast of tabernacles, A. D. 26, when he was thirty years of age, and that of our Lord at the passover following, soon after which John was imprisoned, agreeably to his own declaration, when speaking of Jesus he said He must increase, but I must decrease:

The dates according to the above mentioned calculations are as follow:—

A. D. 26.

Beginning of John's ministry .. Oct. 5.

A. D. 27.

Baptism of Jesus, the end of January.

Beginning of Christ's ministry, and first cleansing of the temple, Nisan 10. or Monday..... April 5.

FIRST PASSOVER Friday..... April 9.

Arrival of Christ at Sychar ... May 13.

Imprisonment of John ..... May 16.

First feast of Pentecost ..... May 30.

Call of the four disciples ..... June 4.

Beginning of the ministry at Capernaum, Saturday..... June 5.

First circuit of Galilee began .. June 6.

A. D. 28.

Miracle at the pool of Bethesda, Mar. 25.

SECOND PASSOVER ..... Mar. 29.

Second feast of Pentecost .... May 19.

Ordination of the twelve. Second circuit of Galilee .. Sept. 23.

Second feast of tabernacles .. Sept. 23.

Death of John the Baptist. Third circuit of Galilee .. Dec. 1.

Second feast of dedication ..... Dec. 1.

A. D. 29.

Mission of the twelve ..... Feb.

First miracle of feeding the multitude, with a few loaves and fishes, April 5.

Discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, Saturday ..... April 7.

THIRD PASSOVER ..... April 16.

Confession of Peter ..... May 20.

Transfiguration, Sunday ..... May 27.

Third feast of Pentecost ..... June 6.

Third feast of tabernacles ..... Oct. 11.

Appearance of Jesus at the feast, Oct. 15.

Miracle on the blind man ..... Oct. 18.

Third feast of dedication ..... Dec. 19.

A. D. 30.

Lazarus raised; journey to Ephraim ..... Jan.

Return to Capernaum and mission of the

• seventy ..... Feb.

Fourth general circuit of Galilee, Mar.

Passage through Jericho, Friday, Mar. 29.

Arrival at Bethany, and unction there,

Saturday afternoon ..... Mar. 30.

Resort of the Jews to Bethany, Mar. 31.

Entry into Jerusalem, Monday afternoon ..... April 1.

Second cleansing of the temple, Tuesday morning ..... April 2.

Close of our Lord's ministry, prophecy on the mount of Olives, and compact of Judas with the sanhedrim, Wednesday, Nisan 12..... April 3.

Last supper, night of Thursday, April 4.

FOURTH PASSOVER, and the crucifixion,

Friday ..... April 5.

Resurrection, Sunday, Nisan 16 April 7.

Ascension into heaven, Thursday, Zif or Jar 26 ..... May 16.

Effusion of the Holy Ghost, Pentecost, Sunday ..... May 26.

It is not possible here to give an adequate idea of the labour and attention devoted to calculations respecting the dates of Christ's life by numerous learned men, nor is it at all necessary to do so. Considerable differences have existed on the subject, particularly as to the duration of our Lord's ministry, which some confine to little more than a year, while others extend it to four years. But nothing of moment to the general reader depends upon settling these disputed points; and it is sufficient to say, that the opinion now generally received, is similar to that of Eusebius, who wrote early in the fourth century, and calculates our Lord to have suffered at the fourth passover from the commencement of his ministry, consequently its duration was rather more than three years.

The dates above stated are from *Greswell*, who, in his *Dissertations on the Harmony of the Gospels*, has fully explained the grounds on which he adopted them. With respect to other calculations,

it is only necessary to mention the dates assigned by *Hales*, who places the birth of Christ in autumn B. C. 5; the beginning of John's ministry, A. D. 26; Christ's baptism near autumn A. D. 27; the commencement of his ministry, at the pass-over A. D. 28; and his sufferings at the same time A. D. 31. The order of events stated by each of these learned and indefatigable writers very nearly agrees with that adopted by *Newcome*, whose harmony had previously been generally considered as preferable to any other, and which has been for the most part followed in this work, and has afforded the basis for the tabular view added to the preface.

The general reader may wish to know why the christian era is not dated from the year of the birth of Christ. It was not introduced till the year A. D. 532, when a Roman abbot, named Dionysius Exiguus, wishing to alter the method of dating then prevalent, which was connected with the memory of the persecuting emperor Dioclesian, attempted to carry back his calculations to the year of Christ's nativity, with the laudable desire, as he says, "that the commencement of our hope might be better known to us." But following an erroneous statement, he reckoned this event to have occurred in the year of Rome 753, and Bede, who lived in the following century, by some mistake placed it a year later, thus making it A. U. 754. This method of calculation was sanctioned by the first German synod, in the eighth century, but was not established by authority till the time of pope Eugenius IV. A. D. 1431, who ordered this era to be used in the public registers.

A question has sometimes been raised respecting the bodily appearance of our Lord. Many have considered there must have been something peculiarly majestic and lovely in his form and countenance, far surpassing the generality of the sons of men. But we may rather believe that his human body was according to the prophet Isaiah: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Or, in other words, that there was nothing peculiarly commanding or impressive in his appearance, his bodily frame probably being worn by his sorrow

for the sins of men, and the toil and hardships of a life which He himself thus emphatically describes; "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." We find him often sorrowing and even weeping, but never indulging in mirth. Aware of the work which was laid upon him, there was indeed much to put him to grief. We have no reason to suppose that the union of the Divine nature, and the communication of the Divine Spirit to his human body and soul, rendered his outward appearance different from that of other sons of men. This union has been left a mystery into which it becomes not man to attempt to penetrate. It is a subject utterly beyond him; he can but form the merest conjectures thereon. See note, Mark 13. 32.

Before leaving this subject, it may be well to add the passage in *Josephus*, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 18, ch. 3. sec. 3, relative to our Lord. He says, referring to a sedition of the Jews quelled by Pontius Pilate, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man: for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. This was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the first, did not cease to adhere to him. For he appeared to them alive again, on the third day; the Divine prophets having foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe (or sect) of christians, so named from him, subsists to this time." Much discussion has arisen respecting the genuineness of this passage, which cannot be here entered upon. *T. H. Horne* has given a view of the evidence for and against it, and considers that it is genuine. *Josephus* mentions John the baptist, and the apostle James, in passages which never have been disputed. Respecting the latter, he says, "Ananus assembled the Jewish sanhedrim, and brought before it James, the brother of Jesus, who is called Christ, with some others, whom he delivered over to be stoned as infractors of the law."

The Talmuds also mention Jesus, his birth, flight into Egypt, miracles, preach-

ing, and death, mixing up their accounts with many falsehoods and aspersions of his character.

Celsus, a heathen, a bitter opponent of christianity in the second century, admits the leading facts of Christ's life; ascribing many things to magical arts and misrepresenting others.

Several heathen writers, principally historians, who lived at the time of Christ, or very shortly after, and especially Tacitus, contain passages which furnish important testimonies to the existence of our Lord, the history of the Jews, and the early progress of christianity.

#### THE PRIVATE LIFE OF CHRIST.

The personal or private history of Christ is very important, as it exhibits the example left for our instruction that we should follow his steps, since every one that "saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked."

*Bogue* says, The perfection of Christ's character stamps a peculiar excellence on the New Testament. A representation is given of one entirely free from every error and every sin, of one perfectly wise and perfectly good. This character rises out of the whole of the history of his life and death. He is displayed both in active employments and in sufferings—there is from first to last a full display of perfect rectitude and perfect goodness.

*T. Williams* observes, By the private life of Christ is intended those parts of his conduct in which he acted—not so much in his public character, as the Messiah of the Jews, or the Saviour of the world; but, as a man, made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, Heb. 4. 15. Concerning these, he has himself said, I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done, John 13. 15, and St. Peter tells us he left us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. 2. 21. He adds, that we must take into estimation how far our individual situations correspond with his, for viewing him in his prophetic character, his highest ministers must advance with caution, and in many things contemplate him, not to imitate, but adore. *Taylor* says, As the holy Jesus did some things which we are not to imitate, so we are to do some things which we cannot learn from his example. He instances in the case of duties which imply a previous

state of sin, as repentance; or which arise out of relations, which it was not convenient or proper for Christ to sustain; as the duties of a husband, a parent, or a public magistrate. To follow our Lord's example aright is to tread in his steps; but it must be with a due sense of our inferiority. *Blair*, however, has well observed, Hardly is there any emergency which can occur in life, but from some incident in our Saviour's conduct, from some feature displayed in his character, we are enabled to say to ourselves, Thus Christ would have spoken, thus he would have acted, thus he would have suffered, if he had been circumstanced as we are now.

*Williams* proceeds, Let us then walk in his steps, or in other words, follow his example; which is not merely like a picture to be admired, but resembles a hieroglyphic drawing, in which every feature is a precept. He who duly considers, with what fervour and agony of spirit Jesus prayed, will insensibly be excited to the like devotion. He who attentively observes with what candour, tenderness, and sensibility he treated the poor, the afflicted, the penitent; the fidelity, zeal, and earnestness with which he reproved infidels and hypocrites; or with what patience, meekness, and piety he bore insult and persecution, can be at no loss how he ought to act in any of those circumstances. The study of the example of our Lord Jesus some have said is calculated to withdraw our attention from his Divinity and atonement. This, remarks *Chalmers*, is most utterly and experimentally untrue. He who looks most frequently to Christ for the purpose of imitation, will also gather most from him on which to prop his confidence, and that, too, on a right and evangelical basis; a growing, spiritual discernment will result from a growing conformity to the will and to the image of the Saviour. He that keepeth my commandments, to him will I manifest myself. He that giveth himself up to all righteousness is guided into all truth. *Williams* further considers the life of Christ, not only as an example, but also as an argument, the most decisive of all arguments, in favour of the truth of christianity.

*Bickersteth* urges the example of Christ as most important to be attended to, and subjoins the following particulars, which we should imitate:—See also *Burkitt*.

1. His early piety, Luke 2. 46, 47.
2. His obedience to his earthly parents, Luke 2. 51.
3. His unwearied diligence in doing good, Acts 10, 38.
4. His humility and lowliness of mind, Matt. 11. 29. His self-denial, Phil. 2. 7, 8. His contentment in a mean condition in this world, Luke 9. 58. He submitted to be a carpenter, Mark 6. 3.
5. His frequent and long-continued private prayer, Mark 6. 46, Matt. 14. 23, Luke 9. 18. His faith in prayer, John 11. 42.
6. His frequent praise and thanksgivings, Matt. 11. 25, John 11. 41.
7. His compassion towards the miserable and distressed, Matt. 20. 34, Luke 7. 12, 13. His sorrow for their sufferings, Mark 3. 5.
8. His edifying and useful discourse, Luke 14. 7, 24. 13.
9. His kind and condescending behaviour, Matt. 11. 29, Luke 5. 29.
10. His patience under sufferings and reproaches, 1 Pet. 2. 23. His readiness to forgive injuries, Luke 9. 54, 56; 23. 34.
11. His laying to heart the sins as well as sufferings of men, Mark 3. 5.
12. His zeal for the public worship of God, John 2. 17, Luke 4. 16. His impartial reproof of sin, Matt. 22. 18.
13. His cheerful submission to his heavenly Father's will, Matt. 26. 39.
14. His love and practice of universal holiness, Matt. 20. John 4. 34, 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16.
15. His subjection to government, Matt. 17. 27, Matt. 22. 21.
16. His victory over temptation, Matt. 4. 1—10.

If reference to the character of our Redeemer as man, *Burkitt* well cautions, "Take heed that you do not so consider Christ for your pattern, as to disown him for your Saviour and Redeemer. May God preserve us from this growing error, which stabs the heart of the christian religion, in that it deprives us of the choicest benefits of Christ's death—namely, the expiation of sin by a proper satisfaction to the Divine justice."

#### ORDER OF EVENTS IN THE PASSION WEEK.

The events which occurred during the few days before and subsequent to the crucifixion of our Lord, have often been minutely examined, for the purpose of arranging them according to the days on

which they took place. Had this been a matter of essential importance, we may be assured that the precise times would have been more clearly marked: still it is interesting to have a connected view of this most important period, and a brief sketch is here presented to the reader, chiefly following the plan which *Townsend* has adopted.

THE SIXTH DAY before the crucifixion, or what may be called the Saturday.—On this day Christ came to Bethany, and was anointed in the house of Simon the leper.

THE FIFTH DAY, or Sunday.—Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem took place on this day. He cast out the buyers and sellers from the temple. He healed the sick there. The Greeks came to Philip desiring to see Jesus, and our Lord spake as recorded in John 12. In the evening of this and the following days he returned to Bethany.

THE FOURTH DAY, or Monday.—In the morning, on his way to Jerusalem, Christ pronounced a curse against the barren fig tree. He again cast out the buyers and sellers from the temple, and taught there.

THE THIRD DAY, or Tuesday. On their way to Jerusalem, the disciples saw that the fig tree was dried up from the roots. Our Lord, when in the temple, delivered the parables of the vineyard and the marriage feast. He replied to the herodians and sadducees, as well as to the pharisees, and questioned the latter concerning the Messiah. He then reproved the pharisees, applauded the liberality of the poor widow, and departing from the temple, sat on the mount of Olives, where he delivered his prophecy respecting the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming, adding the parables of the virgins, the servants and talents, and of the sheep and goats.

THE SECOND DAY, Wednesday.—On this day, the chief priests and elders appear to have held their consultation at the palace of Caiaphas, respecting the taking of Christ, when Judas came to them, and offered to betray him in the absence of the multitude. Most commentators suppose that our Lord remained this day at Bethany, probably in solemn contemplation of his approaching sufferings. *Greaveswell*, however, considers that our Lord remained at Bethany on the Sunday, during which day the resort of persons thither to see him and Lazarus was so

great as to excite the jealousy of the chief priests and sanhedrim; and therefore he places the events above mentioned on the days following that to which they are generally referred, reckoning that our Lord delivered his prophecy on the Wednesday.

**THE DAY BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION, Thursday.**—Our Lord directed his disciples to make the preparation for the passover, and in the evening came and partook of it with them, instituting the last supper. The particulars of this important event require separate consideration. Early in the night Christ was betrayed.

**THE DAY OF THE CRUCIFIXION, Friday.**—Christ, when apprehended in the garden, was led to Annas first, and then to the palace of Caiaphas, where he was examined and condemned as a blasphemer, and insulted by the servants of the high-priest. As soon as it was day, a council was held how to dispose of Jesus; when being questioned whether he was the Christ, he made the declaration implying that he was so. Judas came to this council and confessing that he had betrayed innocent blood, cast down the bribe he had received, and going forth hanged himself. The Jewish council caused Jesus to be taken before Pilate, being anxious to shelter themselves from the displeasure of the multitude, by the aid of the Roman power. Pilate, after hearing the accusation, and examining Jesus, declared him innocent. He then sent him to Herod, who having mocked our Lord, sent him again to Pilate.

Pilate again declared Jesus to be innocent, and sought to release him, but the rabble, at the instigation of the chief priests and elders, preferred Barabbas, and insisted that Christ should be crucified. Pilate, after a fifth effort to deliver Jesus from their wrath, gave him up to his soldiers, who led him away to Golgotha, with two malefactors who were also sentenced to die.

The hours at which these several events took place, are calculated to be as follows: The apprehension in the garden about ten at night. About eleven Jesus was sent to Caiaphas. After midnight he was condemned and abused by the officers and servants. About four the sanhedrim met, and soon condemned him. He was led away to Pilate about five, and probably condemned finally about seven. Two hours more would be occupied in the trial of the malefactors, the scourging them as well as Jesus, the preparing of the titles,

and in the slow procession to Calvary, so that the crucifixion took place about nine in the morning. The circumstances respecting the crucifixion are explained in the notes on the passages in the gospels, and they may here be very briefly enumerated, according to the order in which they occurred. When Christ was crucified, the soldiers cast lots for his garments. The rulers derided him, the soldiers mocked, and they that passed by reviled him, while one of the thieves joined therein; but the other recognising and confessing the Saviour, and entreating his mercy, received a gracious assurance that upon that very day he should be with Him in paradise. Our Lord, then beholding his mother standing with other women near the cross, committed her to the care of his beloved disciple, who probably led her away to his abode in Jerusalem, and then returned to Calvary. At noon a darkness spread over the land, and our Lord, after wrestling for a considerable time in the deepest agony of mind, as well as under great bodily sufferings, expressed his painful feeling of the desertion of his heavenly Father. Knowing that all his work was now accomplished, and that only one prophecy remained to be fulfilled, he gave occasion for that by expressing his thirst; when, having received some vinegar, he said, It is finished, and commending his spirit unto his Father's hands, he gave up the ghost, voluntarily resigning that life which no mortal power could have taken from him against his will.

The seven words, or sentences, uttered by our Lord while upon the cross are frequently referred to; they are as follows: 1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, Luke 23. 34. 2. Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise, Luke 23. 43. 3. Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy mother, John 19. 26, 27. 4. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt. 27. 46; Mark 15. 34. 5. I thirst, John 19. 28. 6. It is finished, John 19. 30. 7. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, Luke 23. 46. Seven excellent and weighty sayings and full of instruction, as *Flavel* remarks in his sermons upon them.

Then the veil of the temple was rent. Then the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, and the graves gave up their dead. Then the heathen officer, who watched the execution, and the soldiers who had so lately mocked, bore testimony

that the sufferer was indeed Divine, while the less hardened of the spectators withdrew, expressing their sorrow for the deed which had been perpetrated. A few faithful followers still remained on the spot, where the disfigured, lifeless remains of Him they had loved and revered, hung upon the cross. The soldiers, directed by the Jewish leaders, broke the legs of the malefactors to hasten their end, and taking down their bodies committed them to some charnel pit, where such remains were customarily deposited, while one of them piercing the side of Jesus, gave indisputable proof that he was dead; and thus they were restrained from offering that violence to the limbs of Jesus, which if inflicted, would have been a contradiction to the infallible word of God—but such a proceeding was impossible.

We next come to the events preparatory to THE RESURRECTION, connected with it, or subsequent thereto.

#### THE RESURRECTION AND EVENTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

**THE DAY OF THE CRUCIFIXION.**—On Friday evening, when Joseph of Arimathea had obtained permission to bury the body of Jesus, the women, both those who had approached the cross, John 19. 25, and those who stood afar off, Mark 15. 40, followed his remains to the sepulchre. This was similar to many burial places among the Jews, a small room about six feet by nine feet, excavated in the rock, the door closed with a stone slab, and having a small enclosed court before it. There the body was left, after it had been hastily wrapped in linen bandages, with the spices brought by Nicodemus. Most of the women then returned to the city without delay, and prepared spices and ointments before the sabbath came on, but Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Cleopas, remained weeping near the tomb.

We may here notice the circumstances of our Lord suffering on the day immediately before the Jewish sabbath, and in a place near to which one of his disciples had a new sepulchre. Had his body been left in the hands of his executioners, it would have been cast into the common grave of the malefactors. But, as Isaiah prophesied, "His grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." And this place was one close at hand, where it could be deposited imme-

diately, and secured by the Jewish rulers till the third day, that the evidence of Christ's resurrection might be indisputable. Again, had the body been given up to the immediate followers of our Lord, who had no place of sepulture at hand, they would have carried it to some house, that they might perform the requisite acts of attention to the corpse, but the sabbath beginning before these could be completed, the body would not have been buried at the time appointed for the resurrection; which also would have been the case had the body remained on the cross, as it probably would have done if the sabbath had not approached. Thus God, in his providence, overrules the actions of men for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, which, although set forth in prophecy, remain unintelligible to us until fulfilled.

**THE DAY AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION, or Saturday.**—The chief priests and pharisees, having obtained Pilate's leave, secured the sepulchre by fixing a seal upon the stone, and setting a guard of soldiers to watch it, of course satisfying themselves that the corpse was there. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleopas, with Salome, joined in purchasing spices, in the evening, as soon as the sabbath was over. The words in Mark 16. 1, signify that they *then* purchased the spices, which alone would be sufficient to distinguish them from the party mentioned, Luke 23. 56.

**THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, Sunday.**—Mary Magdalene and her companions set out to go to the sepulchre, very early, as it began to dawn. Before they arrived there was a great earthquake, an angel descended and rolled away the stone and sat upon it, and the guards were affrighted. Our Lord then arose, but none of the evangelists attempt to describe the particulars. The sun was rising when the first party of women already mentioned, drew near, and saw the stone was removed, and that the door-way of the tomb was open. As the tomb fronted the east, the rising sun would shine upon it, so that this could be seen. Mary Magdalene, without examining further, ran to inform the apostles. Her two companions ventured into the apartment or court before the sepulchre, where they saw an angel, under the appearance of a young man, clothed with a white garment, sitting on the stone. The women being affrighted, the angel encouraged them to approach, saying, Fear not ye; from which some

have supposed that the guards were still remaining on the spot, struck with terror. The angel told them to go and inform the disciples. They hastened quickly, but were so overcome with amazement, as not to be able to speak to those whom they first met.

In the mean time, Mary Magdalene, having told Peter and John that the body of Jesus was taken away, the two apostles ran to the sepulchre. John arrived first, and standing on the floor of the outer apartment, stooped down, and looking into the cave or tomb, saw the linen clothes lie. Peter coming soon after, went into the tomb, and observed the orderly manner in which the clothes were laid, folded regularly, and not bearing any appearance of having been removed in haste, or in the trepidation which must have attended a removal by his disciples, in the presence of an armed guard, and on a moonlight night, had such an attempt been possible, as it was not, for many reasons. John also went in, and began to believe that his Lord had risen. The apostles then returned to their own homes.

Mary returned to the sepulchre, and stood weeping in the outer apartment; but looking into the tomb, she saw two angels, who asked why she wept, and having told the cause, she turned round and beheld Jesus, but knew not that it was he till he had called her by her name. She was then sent to relate the glad tidings to the disciples, and as she went, the other Mary and Salome joined her, and while they were together Jesus himself met them, saying, All hail; and when they had worshipped him, gave them a message to the disciples.

Meanwhile the soldiers related in the city what had occurred, and the council of the elders bribed them to spread a false report, that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus while they slept. This story, although involving many improbabilities and contradictions, became commonly reported among the Jews.

We have now to notice the second company of faithful women, consisting of Joanna and other Galilean females, with some women of Jerusalem; they, having prepared their spices on the Friday evening, rose at an early hour, but the delay in assembling a large party, and other causes, hindered them from arriving at the tomb till after Mary and her com-

panions had left it. On their arrival they found the stone rolled away, and entered the tomb, but finding neither the body, nor any to give them information, they were much perplexed, when two angels stood by them, and asked why they sought the living among the dead, reminding them of what our Lord had told them about his sufferings and resurrection while he was in Galilee. These women retired from the sepulchre, apparently in a more composed state of mind than the others, and related what they had seen and heard, to the eleven and to others of the disciples.

Though the apostles received from both companies of the women assurances that Christ was risen, they believed not, but still mourned and wept. Peter, however, went again to the sepulchre, but the angels having departed, he only saw the linen clothes.

From Luke 24. 34, and 1 Cor. 15. 5, we find that Christ appeared to Peter before the other disciples, and probably early in the day. His next appearance was to Cleopas and another, in the afternoon, as they went to Emmaus; with them he conversed a considerable time as recorded Luke 24. On discovering it was their Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, a distance of eight miles, with the glad tidings, and while relating to the apostles what had passed, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, conversed with them, showed his hands and side, and when they distrusted for joy, he did eat before them. At this time he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

DURING THE REST OF THIS WEEK, those who had seen our Lord informed the other disciples that he was risen, and conversed respecting it, but some still refused to believe, and among them the apostle Thomas.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK FOLLOWING, Thomas, and the rest of the apostles, with other disciples, being together at meat, Jesus again appeared to them. He desired Thomas to touch his wounds, who being convinced, exclaimed with devout adoration, My Lord and my God! Jesus then mildly rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.

SOME DAYS AFTER, our Lord showed himself in Galilee to the apostles, and more than five hundred of his disciples, who assembled by appointment for the



purpose, agreeably to his words before his death, and after his resurrection. He appeared first at a distance, when some doubted, but for their fuller satisfaction he drew near, and conversed with them, and declared that all power was given to Him, in heaven and in earth.

SUBSEQUENTLY he appeared to Peter and six others of the disciples who had remained together in Galilee. So little had they anticipated their future honourable employment as apostles, that they seem to have resumed their former humble occupation, and were fishing on the sea of Tiberias, when Christ had that intimate discourse with them recorded John 21.

AFTER THEIR RETURN TO JERUSALEM, our Lord again gave instructions to his disciples, and commissioned them to preach the gospel to all nations. Whether this was done upon one or more occasions does not appear, but on the fortieth day after his resurrection, he led them to the part of the mount of Olives where the district of Bethany began, and there ASCENDED in their sight.

A few observations may be added to the preceding account, respecting the chief difficulty experienced by early harmonists; this was to reconcile the accounts of the different evangelists respecting the visits of the women to the sepulchre. *West* was the first who published a statement showing that all difficulties may be accounted for on the principle of there being two companies of women; and, singular to relate, *Pilkington* and *Doddridge* had at the same time come to a similar conclusion. *Townson* has shown that these two parties of women may easily be supposed to have visited the sepulchre, nearly at the same time, without encountering each other, either in going or returning. He illustrates this by reference to a plan of Jerusalem, compiled from ancient documents. The reader will understand his account by reference to the plan in the present work. It will be necessary to observe, that the situation of the houses mentioned has been preserved by tradition, and by the erection of churches or public buildings upon their sites. There is no reason to doubt its being correct, as though the city was razed from its foundations by the Romans, yet it did not remain long without inhabit-

ants; and the christians returning thither would be guided to the sites they venerated, by the natural elevations of the ground, and the bases of the walls near which these houses were situated. Nor is it difficult to suppose many circumstances which explain Zebedee's possessing a house at Jerusalem; and we are to remember that this account of the resurrection, and the map referred to, were drawn up and framed quite independently of each other, so that their undesignated agreement adds considerable weight to the evidence.

We now have to state the places from whence the two parties of women had to proceed. 1. Zebedee's house. This is supposed to have stood near the wall, a little to the north of the Dunghill-gate. Here Salome, the wife or widow of Zebedee, would reside with her son John, and here probably the spices were deposited. The two Marys would proceed from the places where they lodged to this house, and from thence their nearest way to the sepulchre would be through the Dunghill-gate. 2 Joanna, being the wife of Herod's steward, would probably lodge in or near the house of Herod, which it will be seen in the plan was situated to the north of the temple. The direct way from that quarter to the sepulchre, would be through the gate of the Valley, and the way thither was quite different from that of the other party. The distance the party of Joanna had to go was more than twice the distance from Zebedee's house, and if they were rather later in starting, there is no difficulty in concluding that their arrival at the sepulchre would be at least an hour later, time enough for all that is supposed to have taken place before their arrival.

The first party of women were sent to the apostles. John, we conclude, lived in the house of his father, and Peter evidently was near him; the sites of the houses of James and of Thomas are also pointed out as having been in the immediate neighbourhood. The women therefore, in proceeding thither, would not meet Joanna and her companions advancing by a different road.

These particulars will suffice, without entering into a minute examination of the sacred text, to show that there is full evidence that the women were divided into two parties. The reader will find the

statements in the works already referred to, particularly in *Townsend*. *Carpenter* also has illustrated them at considerable length, by a harmony of the text, and a paraphrase, accompanied by a detailed statement of the whole subject, and a copy of *Townson's* map, which is founded on that of *Villelmandus*.

Some remarks may be made on the forms in which our Lord appeared after his resurrection. Before his crucifixion he had been in all points like unto man, sin only excepted. His body was committed to the tomb, but was raised from thence, no trace of it remaining therein, yet in several respects it had properties and powers different from those it formerly assumed. When the disciples were in a room, the doors of which were secured for fear of the Jews, Jesus, himself stood in the midst, showed them his wounds, and desired Thomas to convince himself, by touching them, that a real body, and not a shadow, stood before them; Yet some would urge that as there is no mention that the walls or doors gave way to admit him, he passed through solid matter as through the yielding air, but we need not enter into this point. Previously to this the women had recognised him, and held his feet when they worshipped him. Also he ate with the apostles. The disciples on the way to Emmaus conversed some hours with him, without knowing him to be their Lord, yet when they were permitted to recognise him, he vanished from their sight; and on the day of his ascension this body rose into the air by his own power. When these and other particulars are considered, we must come to the conclusion that it is not possible for the human mind precisely to conceive the manner of Christ's existence after he rose from the dead. The resurrection of the body is one of the most mysterious doctrines of christianity, but our Lord has shown its truth by undeniable facts connected with his own body, which was the first fruits of them that slept. *Townsend* well refers to the information given upon the subject by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. He adds—"The bodies of men shall be raised in that form, and invested with the same nature, properties, and powers, as the resurrection body of their Divine Master. Our vile bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body. More than this the scrip-

ture does not reveal. Why it was that neither Mary Magdalene, nor the disciples going to Emmaus, nor his own apostles at the sea of Tiberias, were able at first to recognise their Lord, though afterwards they knew him, is among those mysteries which we shall understand hereafter, when we ourselves arise from the grave, and renew our former friendships in our glorified bodies." At present, to use the words of the apostle, "we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known."

#### THE PASSOVER AND THE LAST SUPPER.

A question on this subject has perplexed commentators exceedingly, that is, Whether our Lord ate of the Jewish passover with his disciples the night before his crucifixion? Our Lord directed his disciples to prepare the passover, and partook of what is generally considered to have been the passover with them; all agree this was on the Thursday. Yet on the day after, being Friday, the chief Jews refused to enter the judgment hall, lest they should thereby be defiled, and rendered unfit to eat the passover. This at first appears to involve a contradictory statement.

Four opinions have been advanced to explain the above. 1. That Christ did not eat the passover, but a supper previous to, or in preparation for it. 2. That he did eat it that year, and that the Jews ate it at the same time. 3. That he ate a passover, but one of his own institution, different from that of the Jews. 4. That he ate the passover that year, but not at the same time with the Jewish rulers. The arguments in support of these views, are well summed up by *A. Clarke*, and are abstracted by *Townsend*. A brief statement must suffice here. The *first* is considered to be supported by some passages in John, and by the absence of any particular mention of the preparations, though they may be implied by the expression, that the disciples made ready the passover. In supporting the *second*, the anxiety of the Jews to avoid defilement, is considered as referring to the other paschal sacrifices; and the preparation, John 19. 14, to the preparation for the sabbath which occurred during the paschal festival. Neither of these two opinions are satisfactorily made out. The *third* endeavours to meet the dif-

facilities arising from the expressions on which the former two are founded, by admitting that our Lord ate a supper, but that it was of a mystical kind, and instead of the passover, which his approaching death would prevent him from commemorating. Some circumstances which appear to oppose it can be explained. The number of lambs slain on this occasion in Jerusalem, in one year, is stated by Josephus; they exceeded 200,000; this rendered it necessary that they should be slain privately, and not all presented at the temple. This also, according to some, rendered it necessary to allow the passover to be celebrated during the whole of the twenty-four hours of the fourteenth of Nisan. The misunderstanding the direction of our Lord to Judas, John 13. 29, is a strong argument to prove that the night in question was not that of the regular observance of the passover, else no persons would have been found at their shops to sell the articles needed for the feast.

The fourth opinion, as *Townsend* remarks, appears most consistent with scripture, and leads us to conclude with *Benson* and *Hales*, that the first three evangelists show that part of the Jews sacrificed the paschal lamb on the same day with our Saviour, that is on the Thursday, while the expressions of St. John indicate that many scribes and pharisees and other leading characters, did not sacrifice it till the evening of the Friday, after our Lord had been crucified. See particularly John 18. 28. Both Matthew and John were inspired apostles, and present at the last supper, so that we cannot suppose their accounts to be in the least degree contradictory; and as there is an apparent discrepancy, we may seek for some method to explain it, being assured that such must exist.

It is obvious that if there were any error as to the time of commemorating the passover, it must have been on the part of the Jews, not of our Lord. Without entering minutely into the lengthened investigations of learned men, it is sufficient to say, that the Jews calculated their months from imperfect tables, or from the actual first appearance of the new moons, or rather from both. They had an assembly regularly held at Jerusalem for this purpose, and subordinate ones in other places. At the time when they expected the new moon to appear,

they sent out approved persons to watch, and as soon as these reported that they had seen the new moon, messengers were immediately sent through the land to make it known. In the year when our Lord suffered, the intercalary month Vædar appears to have been added to the calendar, as was usual about every two years; and the length of this month was not settled by the council, for their own practice, till the appearance of the new moon of the ensuing month Nisan. Hence there would sometimes be a difference between the Jerusalem council and the rest of the Jews, as to the mode of reckoning the first day of Nisan. If they had that year announced an intercalary month of 29 days, and afterwards thought it ought to have been of 30 days, it is evident that what was the 13th of Nisan to the rulers would be the 14th to the people in general.

There is also another source whence this difference may have arisen, partly indeed connected with the method of calculation already stated. *Cudworth* has shown the uncertainty that attended the Jewish method of computing the beginnings of their months, and has described from the Talmuds the manner in which the council sat to receive witnesses of the moon's appearance, or non-appearance, on the 30th day of the month, and directed proclamation to be made accordingly. If a credible witness came some days afterwards, and testified that he had seen the moon a day earlier than the others, or on the expected day, when they had not seen it, the council were bound to reckon the beginning of the month accordingly; but they were very reluctant to receive such testimony, and at length decreed that all were to observe their feasts according to the first order, though it proved to be founded on a wrong calculation. This mistake *Cudworth* supposes took place in the time of our Lord, but that it is not likely he would submit to a perversion of the original custom, and therefore, following the true appearance of the moon, as confirmed by sufficient witnesses, he ate the passover accordingly with his disciples, and probably others did the same, while the rulers adhered to their erroneous calculation. He refers to Epiphanius as authority to prove that there was "a tumult" among the Jews about the passover that very year. We also learn from other authorities, that constant differences pre-

vailed among the Jews as to the time of observing their feasts.

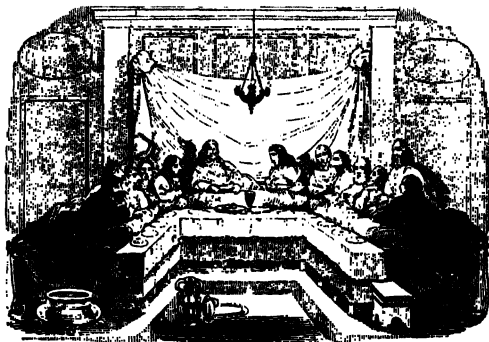
This subject is important, as proving that the supposed discrepancy can be reconciled, and also as it shows the uncertainty under which the Jews acted, even on so important an occasion, from the imperfect nature of their calendar. It is a striking instance of the burden of the ceremonial observances of the law, from which Christians are happily freed. Points of a doctrinal nature are not in the least affected by the question, while strong internal testimonies to the correctness and consistency of the narratives of the evangelists are brought forward by the examination.

#### THE PASSOVER.

The Jewish method of celebrating the passover, at the time when our Lord was upon earth, appears to have been as follows, although it is not certain that these ceremonials were all observed, or exactly in the order here specified.

1. The males of the family or company, consisting of not less than ten, and sometimes twenty, met together in the evening, when they washed their hands and feet, and placed themselves at table in the reclining posture then customary. In earlier times they ate the passover standing, with their staves in their hands, as about to begin a journey, Exod. 12. 11; but latterly they reclined at this, as at other meals, to indicate that they had been brought into the promised land of their rest. A cup of wine, mixed with water, was presented to each guest, over which a blessing was pronounced, "Blessed be He that created the fruit of the vine." The lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, were then placed on the table as appointed by the law, also other articles of food. The principal person distributed pieces of the paschal lamb, with unleavened bread, until all the lamb was eaten. The paschal lambs had been killed in the temple, with observances instituted for the occasion, and then being taken to the respective houses, were roasted on spits made of pomegranate wood. Every person present was bound to eat to the size of an olive at least. 2. After this first repast they again washed their feet, and replaced themselves at table, to eat

the second course or repast, consisting of bitter herbs, with a kind of sauce made of bruised palm branches, and berries or raisins, mixed with vinegar. This sauce was thick; it was called "haroseth," and considered as representing the tempered clay from which their forefathers made bricks during their bondage in Egypt. Another cup of wine was drank. The master also divided the bread into two parts, and laying one aside, covered with a napkin, he blessed the other and distributed it, saying, "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the whole world, in the eating of unleavened bread." 3. He then took the reserved part from the napkin, and divided it into as many portions as there were guests. At that time, or as some think at an earlier period, one of the youngest of the company asked the meaning of this rite, Exod. 12. 26, "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? Then ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." The master answered by repeating the hagadah or showing forth. "This is the bread of affliction, which our fathers ate in the land of affliction. Let him that is hungry come and eat the passover; let him that hath need come and eat the passover; for this passover is our saviour and our refuge." Or, he explained the symbolical meaning of the different dishes and observances, expounding from Deut. 26. 5, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father," &c. Then taking the cup, he first tasted it himself, and presented it to each, saying, "Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, King of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine." This third cup was usually called the cup of blessing. The apostle refers to it, 1 Cor. 10. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" See also Ps. 116. 13. 4. The whole ended with taking a fourth cup of wine, and singing the 113th and five following psalms of praise and thanksgiving, of which the 118th, the last, was peculiarly significant of the coming of Christ. This was called the great Hallel or Hallelujah.



THE LAST SUPPER.

The preceding particulars, as *Hales* he gave it to Judas, who, finding himself remarks, throw considerable light on the thus detected, hastened from the place, concise and intricate accounts of the evangelists. The events of the passover and last supper, as blended together, may be considered to have occurred as follows, according to the views taken by him and other commentators.

When the paschal lamb was dressed, and all things were ready, Jesus reclined at table with the twelve, and according to Luke 22. 15, he expressed that he had earnestly desired to eat this passover with them before he suffered. Taking a cup of wine, he blessed it, and told them to divide it among themselves. When the paschal supper, or what is called the first course, was ended, Jesus rose from table, and to set them an example of humility, washed their feet himself; he also exhorted them against seeking who should be the greatest. Our Lord then made allusion to the traitor Judas, John 13. 11, gave them the encouragement of a future glorious reward, Luke 22. 28—30, and cautioned them all, especially warning Peter that Satan had desired to sift him.

Having replaced themselves at table to eat the second course, Christ testified more plainly than before, that one of them should betray him, and said that it was he that dipped his hand in the dish with him. Judas asking, as well as the rest, Is it I? Jesus answered that it was, but unheard by the rest. Then John, instigated by Peter, inquired who was meant, and our Lord told the beloved disciple, who reclined next him, that it was the person to whom he should give a sop. After dipping it in the haroseth or sauce,

Our Lord then took the bread which had been reserved, and blessed, and broke, and gave to the disciples. Likewise he took the cup and told them, Drink ye all of it, Matt. 26. 27, showing by the words with which he accompanied these actions, that he instituted a solemn memorial of the sacrifice of his death. He concluded the whole by singing with his disciples a hymn, or the psalms already mentioned. Several principal commentators consider that the bread was distributed before Judas left the table, but they generally agree that he went out before the cup was given. That cup, as *A. Clarke* remarks, our Lord spoke of as typifying his blood, the blood of the new covenant—that grand plan of agreement or reconciliation which God was now establishing between himself and mankind, by the passion and death of his Son, through whom alone men could draw nigh to God.

After this had passed, our Lord delivered those affecting and deeply interesting discourses recorded by St. John, which so strongly indicate his affection to his disciples, and his care for his church, partly in the room where they supped, and partly on the way to the mount of Olives, or rather to the garden of Gethsemane, which is at the foot of that mountain.

#### THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

PETER.—The latest direct mention of this apostle in the Acts, is in connexion with the first council at Jerusalem, Acts 15. But in Gal. 2. 11, there is a notice

concerning his having dissembled at Antioch, by not eating with the Gentiles after some brethren of Jerusalem had come thither from James. For this dissimulation, Peter was publicly rebuked by the apostle Paul, a circumstance sufficiently disproving the supremacy and infallibility ascribed to him by Romanists.

*Hales* considers that Peter after he left Jerusalem, Acts 12, went to Antioch, and associated there with the Gentile converts, till the Judaizing teachers came with a pretended commission from James, when he, and other Jewish Christians there, temporized with them till the arrival of Paul, who nobly defended the liberty of the gospel. Peter was then convinced of his error, and afterwards, in the first council at Jerusalem, spoke decidedly against the Judaizers.

The remaining history of Peter can only be gathered from ecclesiastical historians. Much controversy has arisen whether he was at Rome or not, but it is generally believed that he was there during the time of Nero's persecution, when he was crucified, A. D. 66. *Townsend* considers that he went there after his deliverance from prison, Acts 12, but there is nothing to support the assertion that he was bishop of Rome.

*Andrew*, it is said, had Scythia and the neighbouring provinces as the field of his labours. From thence he proceeded to Constantinople, and afterwards visited Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, and the adjacent countries. The proconsul of Achaia is said to have ordered him to be crucified.

*JAMES* the brother of John, was slain by the sword at Jerusalem, by order of Herod Agrippa, as recorded, Acts 12. The Romish legends of his acts in Spain are unworthy of the least notice.

*JOHN* is considered to have laboured chiefly in Asia Minor, where he planted many churches. Tradition relates that Mary, the mother of Christ, remained under his care till her death, which took place about fifteen years after the crucifixion. Many years afterwards, being conveyed to Rome, he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil by command of Domitian, but was miraculously preserved from harm. He was afterwards banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he was favoured with the Divine revelation recorded in the closing book of the New Testament. Subsequently, he was allowed to return to Ephesus, where he lived

till the end of the first century, when he departed in peace. He continued to exhort the disciples as long as his strength permitted, and when age and infirmity prevented his usual labours, he was carried to the public assemblies, and uttered these affecting and important words, "Little children, love one another." The preface to his gospel notices his opposition to the heresies which rose in the church of Christ.

• *PHILIP* is supposed to have preached in Upper Asia, and afterwards in Phrygia, where he was hanged or crucified at the city of Hierapolis.

*BARTHOLOMEW* is believed to have preached in India, from whence he returned to the more central parts of Asia, and it is said he was flayed alive and then crucified, at Albanople in Armenia.

*MATTHEW* has Ethiopia assigned as the scene of his labours, where he suffered martyrdom.

*THOMAS* preached among the Medes and in Persia, and from thence to India, where it appears he was put to death by the Brahmins. A body of native Christians yet exist in that country, supposed to be descendants of those converted by the preaching of this apostle.

*JAMES*, called the less, the brother of our Lord, appears to have continued as the principal pastor of the church at Jerusalem, where it is related he was thrown by the Jews from one of the buildings of the temple, and his head was crushed with a fuller's club.

*SIMON* is said to have preached in Egypt and Libya, and afterwards in western Europe. The scene of his martyrdom is laid in Mesopotamia or Persia.

*JUNE*, or Thaddeus, or Lebbeus. He is said to have laboured in Mesopotamia, and afterwards to have gone to Persia, where he was put to death.

*MATTHIAS*, the successor of Judas, has various fields of labour assigned to him; but is supposed to have preached in some of the eastern countries, probably in Capadocia, where he was stoned to death.

The preceding brief accounts of the twelve apostles are chiefly taken from *Cave*. With the exception of the notices of Peter, James, and John, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, little dependence can be placed on them, at the same time it is probable that many of the statements are correct, and all have support from early records. • The work entitled:

"The History of the Church of Christ," contains the most authentic particulars of the early days of christianity.

*Bogue* exhibits fully the evidences for the Divine authority of the New Testament, arising from the testimony of the apostles, and observes, Every line marks sincere, disinterested, and honest men. There is a constant abhorrence of iniquity, a sense of God's presence and holiness, and a deep and clear view of him as the avenger of all iniquity. Their sincerity appears in the whole tenour of their lives and actions, in a most remarkable manner. He also remarks on the manner in which they all unite the deepest humility, with the strongest demands for obedience and attention to their words, when speaking authoritatively in the name of God.

#### MIRACLES.

A miracle is thus defined. "A miracle is an effect or event, contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or it is a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from the known laws of nature; wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission of God; and accompanied with a previous notice or declaration that it is performed according to the purpose and by the power of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority or Divine mission of some particular person."

God usually acts according to a certain course: thus the production of grain by vegetation is according to a law of nature; if it fell from the clouds, it would be a miracle. These rules, that is, this usual course, is established by infinite Wisdom, and there can be no departure therefrom excepting by Divine power. Miracles are direct testimonies from God, for confirming some design or purpose of his wisdom, to mark clearly the Divine interposition. They are appeals to our senses, as doctrines are to our reason; the one admits miracles as showing the Divine nature of the mission of our Lord and the apostles and prophets, the other acknowledges the Divine nature of the doctrines they taught, so far as they relate to good and evil. The credibility of the miracles recorded in scripture are beyond doubt, no historical events stand on stronger, nor indeed on such strong evidence, and we every day believe narratives of passing events on much weaker

grounds. It has been often shown, that the fact of the existence of the most prominent characters of ancient and modern times, rests on much weaker grounds than the gospel history, including the miracles recorded therein.

The proper effect of a miracle being clearly to mark the Divine interposition, it must have characters to indicate such interposition; these *criteria* have been considered to be as follows. 1. That a fact or event stated to be miraculous, must have an important end, worthy of its author. 2. That it be instantaneously and publicly performed, or the effects so visible as to be observable by numbers. 3. Such that the senses of mankind can clearly and fully judge of it. 4. It must be independent of second causes. 5. Not only public monuments must be kept up, but some outward actions must be constantly performed in memory of the fact thus publicly wrought. 6. Such monuments must have been set up, and such observances have been instituted at the time the events took place, and be afterwards continued. *T. H. Horn* shows that all these tests are applicable to the miracles related in the sacred writings, and not to the false or pretended miracles recorded in history.

With respect to the miracles of Christ, *R. Watson* observes, that our Lord constantly appealed to these works as the evidences of his Divine mission and character, and considered them as sufficient to authenticate his claim to the office of Messiah, see John 10. 25, 37; Matt. 11. 4, 5, and other passages. The justice and reasonableness of this appeal is evident when we consider, 1. That miracles are visible proofs of Divine approbation as well as of Divine power. This conclusion was drawn by the man who had been blind from his birth, see John 9. 31—33. Had not the work in which the Saviour was engaged been approved of God, it would not have had the seal of miracles, for the Divine power never can be supposed to contradict the Divine will. Hence those miracles which are ascribed to the interposition of wicked spirits may justly be rejected as incredible. 2. These miracles were of such a nature as would bear the strictest examination, they had all the criteria necessary to distinguish them from the delusions of enthusiasm or the artifices of imposture. Our Lord pointed to them

as plain and indisputable facts, which spoke their own meaning, and carried with them their own authority. They were objects of sense, such as an impostor would not attempt, and an enthusiast could not effect; so palpable and certain as to be admitted by his bitterest enemies, John 11. 47, 48.

*Paley's* Evidences of Christianity contain much that is valuable on this subject, with a full examination and exposure of some pretended miracles noticed in ancient and modern history. Also *Bogue's* Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, contains a valuable summary of the evidence arising from miracles.

Much discussion has arisen as to the period when miracles ceased. This cannot be ascertained, but ancient ecclesiastical writers assert that the power of working them existed in the generation succeeding the apostles, and was continued till the middle of the second century.

#### DEMONIACS.

The persons mentioned in the New Testament as possessed with devils, were not afflicted with some strange bodily or mental disease. They are evidently distinguished from the diseased, see particularly Luke 4. 33—36, 41, though in any view of the case the cure of the demoniacs was miraculous. The effects they in many instances had upon the possessed, and particularly their entering into the herd of swine, never can be accounted for as the results of any distemper. We also find that their bodily sufferings immediately ceased on the evil spirit being compelled to depart. It is evident from scripture that the devil and his angels are real beings, and our Lord distinctly refers to them as acting in subordination to their head. They appear to have been permitted to be more active, and their possessions more common than usual, when our blessed Lord was on earth, that He who came to destroy the works of the devil should more remarkably and visibly triumph over him. Thus the error of the sadducees, then very prevalent among the principal men of the Jews, was most distinctly confuted. We find from Josephus and other historians, that such cases were not uncommon at that time. *Lightfoot* assigns two reasons why there were many demoniacs in Judea in our Lord's time—the people were then advanced to the

height of impiety; and they were strongly addicted to magical arts, inviting evil spirits to be familiar with them.

It will be observed, that what the demoniacs said was indisputably true. They always applied right epithets to our Lord, and he addressed them, not only as distinct from the persons possessed, but as having a knowledge of his person and character not possessed by the Jews. This never could have been the case with mere lunatics; our Lord's answers to them also imply truths and doctrines of the utmost importance. The fact of demoniacal possessions may be considered as one of the things recorded in Divine revelation, to serve as links, connecting the visible with the invisible world. The fearful spectacle of a human being possessed by evil spirits, may have been intended as a terrible representation of future punishment. The demoniac knew Christ, yet hated and avoided him. An outcast from the intellectual and religious world, he grieved over his lot, yet could not repent. In deep misery he heightened his agony by self-inflicted torments. At the last day many shall in like manner address the Saviour with unavailing horror and despair. Like the demoniac they will be compelled to acknowledge his Divinity, "We know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God," while they join in the frantic and piercing cry, "Art thou come to torment us?" In this case, the popular, literal, and simplest interpretation is most probably the correct one; the difficulties of a speculative interpretation, falsely styled philosophical, will always be found to be greatest, and a bible so interpreted may be made to mean any thing.—(33. 62. 64.)

#### PARABLES.

The method of conveying instruction by parables or moral fictions, sometimes in the form of similitudes, allegories, fables, or apologues, was very common, and in high esteem among all ancient nations. The Asiatics used it most frequently, and brought it to perfection.

A parable is a similitude taken from natural things, in order to instruct in spiritual things. Sometimes, however, it is used in scripture to denote a proverb or saying, as Luke 4. 23; a type or emblem, Heb. 9. 9, and a special instruction, Luke 14. 7; or a comparison, Matt. 24. 32; but usually it is a narra-



tive of some supposed event, applied to explain some truth. Our Saviour often adopted this method, and thus the term is generally confined to that sense. Parables are more suited to engage the attention of men in general, than direct instruction, and though often conveying strong censure, are less likely to give offence, and we find one reason for our Saviour's using them was on account of the scribes and pharisees. It is considered that a parable should be founded upon some imagery or circumstances well known, so that the application may be the more easily understood, and that it should be in most of its parts applicable to the instruction it is intended to convey, but it is not necessary that every word should be so, nor is every circumstance mentioned proposed for imitation or commendation; often they are only ornamental and to complete the narrative. Want of attention to this has led many expositors to attempt merely fanciful explanations.

*Maimonides* gives the following rule, "Fix it as a principle to attach yourself to the grand object of the parable, without attempting to make a particular application of all the circumstances and terms which it comprehends." *A. Clarke* observes, that this maxim is the more to be regarded, because it comes from a person who was perfectly acquainted with the subject, and who lived in the very country of parables. It shows that we should not attempt to find a spiritual meaning, or pointed reference in *all parts* of the parable, to the subject illustrated.

Parables are composed of three parts. 1. The outward similitude or mere narrative. 2. The explanation or mystical sense: this our Lord sometimes explained, but generally left to those whom he addressed to ascertain. 3. The scope, or object in view: the latter is often stated in a short sentence, either prefatory or added, as Luke 12. 15, Matt. 18. 35; in other cases the scope must be ascertained from the circumstances with which it is connected; thus the parable of the barren fig-tree, Luke 13, 6—9, evidently pointed to the state of the Jewish nation at that period. Acquaintance with historical circumstances often renders the meaning more forcible and plain, as in Luke 19. 12. With respect to the parables of our Lord, we may certainly conclude that when the words appear capable of different meanings, the most obvious and easiest to be understood is the sense designed. Also they sometimes convey moral precepts of general application, although they have reference to future or distant events, as in the parable of the tares, Matt. 13. 24. The parables of Christ plainly show their Divine origin, they are free from all the absurdities of heathen fables, they are concise, natural, and probable, and peculiarly adapted for the time and country when and where spoken; they are not intended for mere amusement, but to enlighten the understanding, and to purify the heart. They also often contain prophetic declarations concerning the future state of the christian church.

#### LIST OF PARABLES IN THE GOSPELS.

The blind leading the blind, L. 6.	The new cloth and old garment, Mt. 9. Mk. 2. L. 5.	The rich man and Lazarus, L. 16.
The house built on a rock, Mt. 7. L. 6.	The new wine and old bottles Mt. 9. Mk. 2. L. 5.	The master and servant, L. 17.
The two debtors, L. 7.	The plant not planted by God, Mt. 15.	Pharisee and publican, L. 18.
The relapsing demoniac, Mt. 12. L. 11.	The strayed sheep, Mt. 18.	The unjust judge and importunate widow, L. 18.
The rich fool, L. 12.	The unmerciful servant, Mt. 18.	The labourers in the vineyard, Mt. 20.
The lord's return from a wedding, L. 12.	The shepherd and sheep, J. 10.	The ten pounds, L. 19. Mt. 25.
The barren fig tree, L. 13.	The good Samaritan, L. 10.	The two sons commanded to work in the vineyard, Mt. 21.
The sower, Mt. 13. Mk. 4. L. 8.	The guest choosing the highest seat, L. 14.	The wicked husbandmen, Mt. 21. Mk. 12. L. 20.
The tares, Mt. 13.	The great supper, L. 14. Mt. 22.	The wedding garment, Mt. 22.
The casting seed into the ground, Mk. 4.	The proposal for building a tower, L. 14.	The fig-tree putting forth leaves, Mt. 24. Mk. 13. L. 21.
The mustard seed, Mt. 13. Mk. 4.	The king going to war, L. 14.	The thief, Mt. 24.
The leaven, Mt. 13.	The salt having lost its savour, L. 14.	The man taking a far journey, Mk. 13.
The hidden treasure, Mt. 13.	The lost sheep, L. 15.	The faithful and unfaithful servant, Mt. 24. Mk. 13.
The pearl of great price, Mt. 13.	The lost piece of silver, L. 15.	The ten virgins, Mt. 25.
The net gathering every kind of fish, Mt. 13.	The prodigal son, L. 15.	The talents, Mt. 25. L. 19.
The good householder, Mt. 13.	The unjust steward, L. 16.	

## SECTS, OFFICERS, AND ORDERS OF MEN.

**PHARISEES.** This was the strictest of the Jewish sects, and also the most distinguished and popular among them. Its origin is not known, but Josephus mentions that the pharisees were of considerable importance when John Hyrcanus was high-priest, a century before the birth of Christ. Their name was derived from the Hebrew word "pharash," signifying separated, because the pharisees made pretensions to superior strictness in religious observances. They considered that eternal life would be the reward of their good works, and invented a great many observances, in which they required more strictness than in the observance of the law itself, having especial respect to what they called the traditions of their elders, esteeming them of equal weight with the Divine precepts, and they even justified some things as morally right which were only permitted by the Mosaic law. But though they pretended to great holiness, their morality was in fact both lax and corrupt, as our Lord often openly declared to them. They considered that the Divine blessings and promises belonged to the Jews only, and accounted all other nations and persons as enemies, to whom they were not bound to give any assistance; extending this view so far as to consider the unlearned and poor, even among their own nation, as accursed. They pretended to be strict observers of the sabbath, and of oaths, but regarded only the ceremonial observances of the first, and had many evasions with respect to the latter, even maintaining that the words expressed were not binding if there was a secret reservation to the contrary. They accounted their evil desires as of no importance, and indulged in avarice and extortion, while they scrupulously paid tithes of the meanest herbs. They most earnestly sought to make proselytes to their peculiar opinions, but thought themselves defiled if they only touched or spoke with heathens or persons of irregular conduct, and made their outward appearance remarkable by peculiarity in their garb, especially by wearing broad phylacteries, or portions of the law written on slips of parchment, displayed on their foreheads and garments.

*Mosheim* observes that the religion of the pharisees was for the most part founded in deep hypocrisy, and that they were for the most part slaves of avarice and vice,

while they professed to be particularly engaged in the service of their Maker. They, however, had acquired such weight among the people, as to have the direction of public affairs before our Lord's birth, during his life, and after his death, till the destruction of Jerusalem, which event would appear to have been hurried on by their earnest desire for deliverance from the Roman yoke, and especially by their unbelief, which caused them to reject the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah. Most of the strict Jews are still inclined to the principles of this sect, being devoted to traditions and mere ceremonial observances.

**ESSENES.** These were a sect of the Jews but little known. They existed in the time of our Saviour, and were in a great measure free from the hypocrisy of the pharisees, as well as from the open profligacy of the sadducees. They had no regard to tradition, nor were very scrupulous as to the ceremonial law, but taught great strictness as to moral conduct. They seem to have been strict in observance of the sabbath, and in regard for the scriptures, but expounded them allegorically. They presented gifts to the temple, but offered no sacrifices. They lived in a state of equality, paying respect to the aged and to priests, and had all things in common. They entered into no worldly employment excepting agriculture, and admitted none to their society till after three years' probation. If at any time expelled from the society, their doom was fearful. Having sworn to receive no food except from their own sect, the criminal was perjured, or must feed on the grass of the field till he died with hunger; sometimes a repentant criminal was readmitted when at the last extremity. The austere and retired life of this sect, is supposed to have given rise to monkish superstitions. The Romanists have contended that the essenes were christians, but it is evident from the accounts of the Jewish writers, *Josephus* and *Philo*, that they were Jews.

*Neander* considers that the essenes were a company of pious men who withdrew from religious and political strifes, and lived together, at first near the Dead Sea. He considers that they were distinguished from the generality of the Jews, by their knowledge of, and love for something higher than outward ceremonials and dead faith; and that they really did strive after holiness of heart and inward communion with God. It is however evident, from

their objecting to eat or to associate with those not of their own sect and rank, and from other circumstances, that they were imbued with a proud spirit of separation, and many superstitious observances at variance with the true spirit of religion.

**THERAPEUTÆ.** These were a branch of the essenes, who lived in Egypt. They were still more rigid in their observances, and avoided places inhabited by other men.

**SADDUCEES.** The principles of this Jewish sect are supposed to be derived from Sochæus, president of the sanhedrim, about 250 years before Christ, who taught that man should serve God purely from love, and not from hope of reward or fear of punishment. But the name was from Sadoc, one of his followers, who, perverting his doctrine, taught that there was no future state of rewards and punishments. They did not believe in the resurrection, or the existence of departed souls; they contended for free will, and denied a particular providence. Their tenets in many respects were very like those of the epicurean heathen philosophers, but they professed obedience to the Mosaic law, yet only because of its temporal rewards and punishments. They rejected traditions, and seem anxiously to have looked for the coming of the Messiah, but only because they expected him to reign as a mighty temporal king, and desired to share in his worldly glory. Our Lord's whole appearance and conduct were so opposed to their open infidelity and profligacy, that they readily joined with the pharisees in opposing and destroying him and his followers. It has already been observed that the first persecution of the apostles and early christians began when the sadducees were in power, and probably the most numerous party in the sanhedrim. The sadducees were chiefly among the more opulent of the Jews.

**RAB, RABBI, or RABBAN.** These terms signified great, or master, and were titles given to learned men among the Jews. These titles came into use only a short time before the birth of Christ. Rabbi implied greater excellency than Rab; and Rabban (the same as Rabboni, John 20. 16) was formerly ascribed only to seven of their principal Jewish doctors, of whom Gamaliel was one. In later times these titles were conferred in the Jewish schools as degrees.

**ELDERS, RULERS, and SCRIBES,** Acts 4. 5;

members of the council or sanhedrim. The rulers were the chief priests; the scribes were learned doctors of the tribe of Levi; the elders were the seniors and senators of the other tribes.

**SANHEDRIN or SANHEDRIM.** The great council of the Jews, composed of seventy-one members selected from the different tribes. The Jews usually ascribe its origin to the appointment of elders by Moses in the wilderness, but some date it from the return out of captivity, or from the time of the Maccabees. The high priest was usually president, and styled the prince. This council at first sat in a room of the temple in the court of the Israelites called Gazit. Afterwards they removed to other parts of the temple, and at length into the city of Jerusalem. It was the great court of judicature among the Jews, and had power of life and death. When Judea became a Roman province, the council assumed more power, and seems to have acted as a senate, exercising all the authority permitted by the Roman governors, and even usurping some of the authority of the high priests. We find the sanhedrin or council taking the lead in the transactions recorded in the gospels and Acts.

**SCRIBES.** These were an order of learned men, selected from the tribe of Levi, whose professed employment was to write copies of the law; also to expound and enforce it. Some suppose there was also a description of scribes, whose office was of a civil nature, and that they were chiefly from the tribe of Simeon. When prophecy had ceased, the ecclesiastical scribes took upon themselves to interpret and comment on the law, professing to resolve any doubts or difficulties concerning it. This gave rise to numberless glosses and opinions, which perplexed the sacred text, and hence proceeded the doctrine that the traditional law was of Divine origin. The frequent reference in the gospels to the scribes shows the authority they assumed, and the great power they possessed. They had scholars under their care, whom they trained up in their principles and practices, and in the time of our Lord they may be said to have laid aside the written law, having by their corruptions, and misinterpretations rendered "the word of God of none effect through their traditions," Matt. 15. 6. This accounts for the ignorance, as to the spiritual meaning and import of the law, which then prevailed.

**LAWYERS and DOCTORS OF THE LAW** were the same as the scribes.

**HERODIANS.** They appear to have been a political rather than a religious party among the Jews, but as the Jewish government was in many respects connected with their religious observances, they may be enumerated among the sects into which that nation was divided. The leading feature of their principles was, readiness to concur with Herod, in subjecting himself and his dominions to the Roman power, also to pay taxes to foreigners and heathens, and even in some cases to adopt heathen customs, and tolerate their idolatrous practices. In all these things they were directly opposed to the pharisees, which renders their union with that party against Christ, a strong proof of their enmity to him. By the leaven of Herod, against which Christ strongly cautioned his disciples, Mark 8. 15, probably is meant the willingness to acquiesce or participate in idolatrous practices, from interest and worldly policy. In other respects, the Herodians adopted many of the views of the sadducees, or probably, for the most part, were of that sect.

**SAMARITANS.** This sect or division of the Israelites originated in the division between Judah and Israel, in the days of Rehoboam. The capital of the latter kingdom was Samaria. Its inhabitants were much corrupted by the idolatries introduced by their rulers, and still further by the colonies planted in their land under the Assyrians. After the captivity, on the reform introduced by Nehemiah, ch. 13, many who had married strange wives, left Jerusalem and settled at Samaria. Among them was Manasseh, a son of the high priest, who being appointed to the same office by the Samaritans, induced them to forsake their idolatries, and their worship was rendered in many respects similar to that of the temple at Jerusalem, in imitation of which they built one on Mount Gerizim. To this the woman of Samaria referred in her discourse with our Lord, John 4. At that period, the Jews and the Samaritans were opposed to each other in the strongest manner. "He is a Samaritan," was one of the most hateful epithets applied to our Saviour. This is further exemplified by the parable of the good Samaritan.

A few Samaritans still exist. The only part of the scriptures received by them is the books of Moses. Their copies differ

in a few respects from those of the Jews, but not in any material point; they declare that they observe the laws of Moses more rigidly than the Jews, rejecting wholly the traditions of the elders.

**GALILEANS.** These were a faction raised by Judas the Galilean or Gaulonite. They resisted the tax imposed by the Romans upon Judea, when Augustus reduced it to a province of the empire. Their leader exhorted them to seek religious liberty by force of arms, and told them tribute was due to God only.

**ZEALOTS.** They were a body of political enthusiasts who took an active part in resisting the Roman power shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. They resembled the Galileans in their principles, and committed the most horrid atrocities without scruple.

**SICARII,** rendered murderers, Acts 21. 38, were similar to the two preceding. They were named from the practice of wearing poniards under their garments.

**ISRAELITES.** Hebrews, descendants from Jacob.

**AN HEBREW OF HEBREWS.** An Israelite by original extraction.

**HELLENISTS or GRECIANS.** Foreign Jews who used the Greek language.

**GREEKS.** Gentiles, so denominated by the Jews, as for the most part they used the Greek language. The precise application of these terms has, however, been doubted by some, who consider that the proselytes of the gate, or strangers, who worshipped Jehovah, but were not circumcised or strict observers of the Mosaic law, are sometimes included.

**NAZARITES.** Persons under a vow of separation: see Numbers ch. 6.

**NAZARENES.** A name applied to Jewish christians as a disgraceful title, or appellation, in allusion to Nazareth; see also the note, Matt. 2. 23.

**PUBLICANS.** Tax-gatherers, or collectors of the revenue under the Roman government. The taxes were usually let by public auction, hence those who farmed them were called "publicans." Some of them were receivers for a considerable district, as Zaccheus, who is termed a chief publican. These had officers under them, as Matthew, who sat at the place where duties were paid on exports and imports. Many of these inferior officers, like the *rahbars* or toll-gatherers in modern Persia, were infamous for their rapacity and extortions. The office was

considered disgraceful among the Greeks, but was still more hateful to the Jews, who regarded the enforcement of Gentile imposts as a scandal to their religion. Hence the manner in which the publicans are mentioned in the gospels.

#### THE HERODIAN FAMILY.

There are three Jewish monarchs of the name of Herod mentioned in scripture. They were descendants of Antipas, or Antipater, a native of Idumea, a Jewish proselyte, to whom Julius Cesar, after his defeat of Pompey, gave the government of Judea, continuing Hyrcanus as high priest.

Antipater left two sons, Phasaël, to whom he gave the southern part of his dominions, including Jerusalem, and Herod, to whom he assigned the province of Galilee. The Parthians invaded Judea, and carried Hyrcanus and Phasaël into captivity, when Herod fled to Rome. There Mark Antony granted him the title of king of Judea, and by the aid of the Roman power, he obtained possession of his kingdom, in which he was confirmed by Augustus, after a severe contest with Antigonus, who was a competitor for the priesthood.

Herod, usually called the Great, was ambitious, bold, and tyrannical; passionate and inexorably cruel. During his reign, he caused one of his wives, some of his own children, and the greater part of his relatives to be put to death, among them his eldest son Antipater. Many of his subjects also were slain by his orders, and he kept the nation continually in a state of alarm, torturing and murdering both innocent and guilty, when he suspected any of plotting against him. The general expectation of the Messiah, as a deliverer, at this period, contributed much to his anxiety, and explains the trouble at Jerusalem, on the arrival of the wise men, Matt. 2. 1—3. Knowing that he had no title to the supreme authority, he was led to direct the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, and to murder many persons during his reign. Josephus records that a short time previous to his death, he collected all the chief of the Jews at Jericho, and entreated his sister and her husband to cause them all to be killed as soon as he had breathed his last. This act of cruelty, however, they did not commit. Herod died, suffering the most excruciating tortures, a few months after

the massacre of the children at Bethlehem. He reigned thirty-seven years; by him the temple was magnificently rebuilt, and various additions and improvements were made.

Herod the Great assigned his dominions to three sons. To ARCHELAUS he gave Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. His reign began with a tumult in the temple, when three thousand of the Jews were slain. Archelaus went to Rome to solicit the royal dignity, as tributary monarchs were required to do. The Jews sent an embassy to oppose the grant, but he obtained the kingdom. This is alluded to by our Lord in a parable, Luke 19. 12—27. After a turbulent reign of ten years, Archelaus was deposed by Augustus for mal-administration, and Judea was annexed to Syria, as a province of the Roman empire.

HEROD ANTIPAS, a brother of Archelaus, was appointed to the government of Galilee and Peræa, under the title of tetrarch. Josephus describes him as a crafty and incestuous prince, which is confirmed by the gospel history. This Herod put John the Baptist to death, and caused our Lord to be mocked by his soldiers. A few years afterwards he was deposed and banished for aspiring to the royal dignity, and died a miserable exile in Spain.

PHILIP, another son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Trachonitis, Gaulonitis, and Batanæa. He is only named in the New Testament. Josephus represents him as a mild and amiable prince. Lysanias, mentioned Luke 3. 1, as the tetrarch or governor of Abilene, the other fourth part of the dominions of Herod the Great, was not one of his descendants.

AGRIPPA, or HEROD AGRIPPA I., grandson of Herod the Great, by his son Aristobulus, at first lived at Rome as a private person. For some time he was favoured by Tiberius, but being accused of wishing his death, was imprisoned. Caligula created him king of Batanæa and Trachonitis, and Claudius added Abilene, Judea, and Samaria to his dominions. His subjects were satisfied with his government, and he put to death the apostle James to please them. His power and grandeur having inflated his pride, he was struck with a noisome and painful disease, and died as related Acts 12. His brother Herod was king of Chalcis.

HEROD AGRIPPA II., being only seven-

teen years old at his father's death, his dominions were placed under a Roman governor, but he was subsequently admitted to rule over a part of them with the title of king. Before this monarch Paul made his defence, Acts 26. He was the last prince of the Herodian family, surviving the destruction of Jerusalem for a long time.

Herod Agrippa I. left also two daughters, who are mentioned in the New Testament. Both of them were profligate characters. BERNICE married her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, who is not mentioned in scripture. After his death she was suspected of incest with her brother, and subsequently lived with the emperor Vespasian and his son Titus. The latter would have married her but for the displeasure of the Romans at the prospect of such an alliance.

DRUSILLA married Azizus, king of Emessa, but left him to live with Felix, the Roman governor of Judea.

#### JEWISH WRITINGS.

As reference to the writings of the Jews is frequently made by commentators some account of them is here given.

The attention paid by the Jews to the letter of the inspired scriptures is very great; they have even counted the verses and the words, and have marked the middle clauses and letters of each division and book. This has been the means of keeping the originals more accurate than any other ancient writings. The Jews, however, pay in reality greater attention to their own writings than to holy writ. The first class of these are called *Targums*, which signifies "explanations." These are Chaldee paraphrases of scripture, and are supposed to have originated during the Babylonish captivity, or soon after it. On the return of the Jews, comments and explanations were made in the synagogues, in the Chaldee dialect, which had become more familiar to the people than the pure Hebrew language. The earliest *written* Targums are those of Onkelos on the law, and of Jonathan ben Uzziel on the prophets, which are supposed to have been written before the time of our Saviour. There are ten, which embrace the whole of the Old Testament, excepting Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which books are for the most part written in Chaldee. The later Targums, especially, abound with absurd and legend-

ary tales. These writings, however, are of considerable use, as they supply the meaning of many words and phrases occurring in scripture, and give considerable information respecting the manners, rites, ceremonies, and usages of the ancient Jews, and thus throw considerable light upon many allusions in the bible. They also are valuable by supplying the meaning anciently attached to many of the prophecies relative to the Messiah; thus they expose the false glosses and interpretations of modern Jews, and opponents of christianity.

The *TALMUD*, of "Doctrine," is a body of Jewish doctrines and precepts relative to religion and morality. It consists of two parts, the *Misna* or text, and the *Gemara* or comment.

The *Misna*, which word signifies "repetition," is a collection of various Jewish traditions and expositions of texts, which they pretend were delivered to Moses while in the mount, and transmitted through Aaron, Eleazar, Joshua, and the prophets, to the great sanhedrim; and after passing to Simeon and Gamaliel, they were ultimately committed to writing by the Rabbi Jehuda, surnamed *Hakkadosh* or Holy, and completed by him in writing towards the close of the second century, after a labour of forty years. Hence it is called the oral law, and is in many respects held in far greater estimation among the Jews than the written law or Pentateuch. The *Misna* is chiefly in the form of aphorisms, and may be considered as a digest of the traditions held and practised by the pharisees in the time of our Lord. One specimen of the doctrines of the Talmud will suffice—that Abraham is sitting near the gates of hell, and does not permit any Israelite, however wicked he may be, to descend into hell.

To explain the *Misna*, commentaries or *GEMARAS*, have been written. The word signifies "perfection," and is meant to imply that nothing beyond these is to be desired.

The *Gemaras* are two-fold. 1. The *Gemara* of Jerusalem, supposed to have been written in the third or fifth century. This is but little esteemed. 2. The *Gemara* of Babylon. This was written in the sixth century, and is full of the most absurd fables. The Jews esteem it highly, and continually study it, referring to its contents in all cases of doubt and difficulty.

The Talmud is of some use for illustrating manners and customs noticed in scripture. It has been referred to by several christian commentators, particularly *Gill* and *A. Clarke*. *Lightfoot* also has given many extracts from the Talmud, and those laborious divines have rendered it unnecessary for others to spend their time in further examination of these writings unless for some particular subject. It is impossible to refer to the extracts from these storehouses of abomination and falsehood, without being more deeply convinced than ever, of the sacred character of the holy scriptures, and the Divine simplicity of their contents, as manifestly more than human. It is indeed very possible to attend too much to the Jewish writers; and *Ernesti* has well remarked, that we are to seek for help from them only in those cases where it is absolutely necessary; that is, where our knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew tongues affords no means of ascertaining an easy sense, and one that corresponds with the context. Many consider that the valuable commentators above mentioned have in some cases obscured, rather than illustrated the sacred text, by their frequent references to the Jewish writings.

Several of the apocryphal books never existed in the Hebrew, but in some cases information may be derived from their contents as to Jewish history. See note at the end of this work on the Old Testament. While they are not in the least to be regarded as inspired writings, they certainly are not to be considered as utterly worthless, or altogether fables. There are later Jewish commentators, but these need not be here noticed, further than to observe that what the Jews term the Cabala, is regarded by them as the most sublime of all sciences. By the Cabala is meant a mass of mystical interpretations of scripture, and metaphysical speculations concerning the Deity, angels, &c.

Two ancient Jewish writers must be more particularly noticed. 1. *PHILO*, an Alexandrian Jew, who was born about thirty years before the birth of Christ, and is said to have lived for some years after the crucifixion. He makes no direct reference to Christ, but he throws considerable light on Jewish customs, and the historical facts of those times. He evidently was deeply read in the Greek version of the Old Testament, and there

are many striking coincidences between his writings and the epistles of St Paul, which thereby are accounted for. His views respecting the Logos, or Divine Word, so closely resemble those of the apostle John, as to have induced some to suppose he was a christian, which, however, does not appear to have been the case; nor have we any reason to think that he ever visited Judea, to which country christianity was confined in all probability till after his death. *J. P. Smith*, in his "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah," has selected the most important passages of Philo's writings. *A. Clarke*, has given thirty-five instances of particular terms and doctrines found in Philo, bearing similarity to places in the New Testament.

2. *JOSEPHUS*, the well-known historian of the Jews, has left a minute detail of the wars, that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, in which he was personally concerned. This work he undertook by the order of Vespasian, and wrote both in Hebrew and in Greek. His works contain many facts relative to the state of the Jews about the time of Christ, and show the minute fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy respecting the utter subversion of the Jewish state. These writings contain a brief mention of Jesus Christ: see page 624. Josephus was at Rome before and after the Jewish war, and several circumstances in the narrative of one of his voyages induce some to suppose that he was a companion of Paul in his voyage and shipwreck, narrated in the Acts of the Apostles.

#### THE LANGUAGE OF PALESTINE.

Much has been written on the subject of the language of Palestine in the time of Christ and his apostles. There can be no doubt but that the original Hebrew is the most ancient of all languages. This continued the national language, with little intermixture of foreign words, till the captivity. During that period it was much changed, and, on their return, the people spoke a dialect called the Chaldee or Chaldaic. It appears from Neh. 8. 8. that it was necessary to give the sense of the scriptures in this dialect, that the people might understand the reading. By degrees the language became more and more decidedly Chaldee, or, as it is termed, East Aramaic, with a considerable intermixture of Syriac, or West Aramaic words.

Thus the language commonly spoken in Palestine, in the days of our Lord, was an intermixture of the languages of Babylon and Syria, with the original Hebrew. This is confirmed by a few words, as spoken by our Lord, preserved by the evangelists.

The New Testament, however, is written in the Greek language, at that time the most generally understood by writers and readers, being universally adopted throughout the Roman empire, by the upper and middle classes. Philo and Josephus, the most eminent of the Jewish authors, wrote in that language. The Greek appears to have been the official language, and many of the inhabitants of Palestine were Greeks or of Grecian origin. A Greek version of the Old Testament had been widely circulated, and it was the language best known to many thousand Jews, scattered through other countries. Several circumstances also show that it was very generally used for common purposes, even by the inhabitants of Palestine, and it has been urged by some that the Aramaic words, used by our Lord, are noticed by the evangelists, because he usually spoke Greek. Many of his discourses among the inhabitants of the Decapolis and the Syro-phenicians, in all probability, must have been spoken in Greek. This explains why the New Testament should have been written in that language to be most generally useful. A large proportion of these books is pure Greek, but Hebrew idioms and phraseology are to be discerned throughout, and bear strong testimony to their authenticity. The Latin language in Palestine would be confined to a few Romans, and would be little understood by the Jews. The reader may be referred to *Campbell, T. H. Horne, Hug*, and some tracts in the *Biblical Cabinet*, for more particulars relative to this subject.

#### EVENTS FROM THE DEATH OF CHRIST TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

A brief account of the miseries endured by the Jews at the siege of Jerusalem has been given in the comment upon Luke 21. Some further details respecting the interval from the death of Christ, to the destruction of the Jewish state and polity, may be added in this place.

When the Jewish nation had filled the measure of their guilt, by rejecting the long-promised Messiah, the awful hour of retribution speedily arrived. The events

between the crucifixion of our Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem may be briefly stated as follows. A popular commotion arose in Samaria, which being suppressed with great severity by Pilate, led to the recall and banishment of the Roman governor, which was shortly after followed by the deposition of Herod Antipas. The emperor Caligula, A. D. 40, commanded a large gilded statue of himself, in his character of deity, to be placed in the temple at Jerusalem. This mandate excited the utmost horror and distress in Judea. The leaders of the nation besought the Roman governor of Syria not to execute this command, and for several weeks every employment and occupation was laid aside. The country near Ptolemais was covered by vast crowds in mourning habits. Petronius humanely suspended the execution of the order, and Agrippa, then at Rome, with difficulty succeeded in procuring its recall. This event appears to have been overruled to be the means of giving the churches rest from persecution. After the death of Caligula, Agrippa, whose life had more than once been endangered by the capricious fury of that tyrant, was appointed king of the Jews. To gratify the malignant passions of the Jewish rulers, he persecuted the Christians, and put the apostle James to death; but he shortly after fell a victim to his own impious vanity at Cesarea, A. D. 44. The soldiery insulted his memory, which led to angry feelings between them and the Jews, and became one cause of the subsequent troubles.

Judea again became a Roman province, and Cuspius Fadus was appointed its ruler. A famine then prevailed, and the commotions of the second Theudas followed. In A. D. 48, when Ventidius Cumanus was the Roman governor, the Jews, indignant at the sacrilegious conduct of a Roman soldier, insulted their ruler. A tumult ensued, when several thousand Jews were crushed or trampled to death in the narrow avenues of the temple. Other disturbances followed.

Felix was appointed governor, A. D. 51, and a course of barbarous cruelties and oppressions followed, by which the people were goaded into open rebellion. Robbers infested every part of the land, false Messiahs arose, the murders and the executions were beyond enumeration. The high priest was murdered at the altar, and the horrid work of assassination was



pursued in the temple. The Jewish historian says, "God abandoned Jerusalem as a detested city from that hour, and sent the Romans to be the ministers of his vengeance." At this time an Egyptian Jew led out numbers from Jerusalem, and on his return, conducted 30,000 men to the Mount of Olives, promising a miraculous deliverance from their heathen foes; but many of his followers were slain, and the rest dispersed.

Festus succeeded to the government, A. D. 60, and by a firm and rigid administration of justice, he did much to repress these disorders for a time. On his death, they revived under the rapacious government of his successor Albius, and their troubles were further increased by the discharge of 18,000 workmen on the completion of the building of the temple. But when Gessius Florus ruled, A. D. 64, the nation found that their former sufferings were light when compared with those inflicted by his ferocious despotism, which appeared to be intended to force them to open revolt. They appealed in A. D. 66, to the Syrian prefect, but in vain. In this year 255,000 paschal lambs were offered at Jerusalem, showing that on the lowest computation, three millions must have been assembled at this festival. Many prodigies had already begun to warn the people that the cup of Divine wrath was about to be poured on their devoted race. God had left them, and destruction was close at hand.

A circumstance apparently of little moment, gave the immediate impulse to the fatal overthrow of the Jewish nation. Cesarea had been pronounced a pagan city. A Greek refused to part with some land near a synagogue, and insulted the Jews when engaged in their religious observances. A contest followed. The Jews, being worsted, sought redress, but the conduct of Florus showed that it was his intention to oppress them yet more severely, and they prepared for war.

A massacre of more than 3000 persons at Jerusalem followed soon after, and an unsuccessful attempt was made by Florus to plunder the sacred treasury. Agrippa endeavoured to allay the popular rage, but was compelled to leave the city. Open warfare now began, and some places of strength were taken from the Romans. The garrison of Jerusalem surrendered on capitulation, but were slaughtered without mercy. Several massacres of Jews

followed, at Alexandria, Cesarea, and in other heathen cities, while the whole of Judea was a scene of wretchedness and blood.

A powerful army commanded by Cestus Gallus, marched into Judea, A. D. 66, and approached close to the walls of Jerusalem, when the Roman general made an attack, and the peaceful party among the Jews resolved to admit the Romans, to save their city from ruin. An hour or less would have put Cestus in possession of the city, when he commenced a retreat, but was defeated near Beth-horon, with considerable loss; and, in addition to a large booty, the Jews captured all his military engines, which they afterwards used in the defence of their city. The Jewish nation were thereby animated to continue the contest, but many of them convinced what would be the inevitable result of the struggle with the Roman power, departed from the city. The Christians, remembering the warning of our Lord, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, fled to Pella, a city beyond Jordan, far from the scene of war.

Vespasian was now sent to crush the Jewish rebellion; meanwhile the Jews prepared for the most desperate resistance. Allies they had none, and their countrymen in foreign cities were themselves suffering from, or expecting spoliation and massacres. Josephus, the historian, was intrusted with the command of Galilee, and by a most obstinate resistance in Jotapa, he arrested the progress of the Roman forces during forty-seven days. At length that city was taken by assault on July 1. Josephus, saved in a most wonderful manner, remained a prisoner, being preserved to write the history of the destruction of his nation.

Other cities successively fell before Vespasian and his son Titus, and the lives of the wretched Jews were seldom spared. Many of the nation were now desirous to submit, but the violent party of the zealots prevailed, and perpetrated the most unheard-of cruelties. While their enemies were approaching, the city of Jerusalem was distracted by acts of violence and massacre, and no one was safe from being hurried to instant death. Such horrors were perpetrated, that Vespasian suspended his onward progress, not only that his soldiers might gain strength by the interval of rest, but that the Jews might effect their own destruction.

During the year 69 and part of 70, full opportunity was given for these dreadful scenes at Jerusalem and in the vicinity. Several changes took place in the imperial government. At length, all was settled by the elevation of Vespasian, and Titus returned to Judea to finish the subjugation of the rebellious nation. He approached Jerusalem, one of the most remarkable cities in the world for its situation, and most magnificent and glorious when viewed from the surrounding heights, but at that time the habitation of violence and all that is evil. The details of these enormities cannot here be entered upon. Yet at that time, thus disordered within, and threatened from without, an infuriated multitude thronged to the city to keep the passover; and it is calculated that between two and three millions of persons were enclosed within the walls of this devoted city. Vast stores of provisions were destroyed, sanguinary feuds prevailed, and priests, while occupied in their sacred duties, often perished by the weapons of the different factions who fought even in the temple courts.

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, during the siege, were John of Gischala and Simon the son of Gorias, each of whom was at the head of a band of desperate assassins. The Romans began the siege in April A. D. 70. After a series of attacks, the suburbs were possessed by the Romans, part of the inner wall was thrown down, but the Jews defended the breach with the utmost obstinacy, and when overpowered, still retained the upper city, Antonia, and the temple. The greater part of the inhabitants would gladly have surrendered, but the zealots slaughtered all who spoke of peace. Some, however, escaped to the Romans and were allowed to depart.

Famine now prevailed. The armed men seized every article of food, all who retained the appearance of health were suspected to have concealed supplies, and were tortured to compel them to produce their stores. Internal discord still prevailed, and the city was a scene of bloodshed. Titus, enraged at the obstinacy of the Jews, ordered all who were taken, to be put to death. Many were seized who ventured beyond the walls during the night in search of roots and herbs, they were crucified in the morning, and several hundreds were frequently seen at once agonizing in the same bodily

tortures they had inflicted on the Messiah! The zealots only made this a plea for more desperate resistance.

Several strenuous efforts of the Romans to gain possession of the inner walls having been repulsed, Titus caused the whole city to be surrounded with a trench, agreeably to the precise words of our Lord, and thus entirely cut off the Jews from all supplies; while the usual attacks were continued. This circumvallation, thirty-nine stadia in circumference, was completed in three days. The dreadful state of Jerusalem then exceeded the power of language to describe, while in the Roman camp some thousands of prisoners were cut open while living, to search their bodies for gold and jewels they were supposed to have swallowed! Titus called his gods to witness that he was not the guilty cause of such unexampled horrors. Six hundred thousand persons died within the walls, and the dead bodies, too numerous to be thrown over the precipices, were piled up in the empty houses, or left in the places where they had expired. Many died with their eyes fixed on the temple. Amidst these scenes of horror the zealots continued their excesses. At length the fort of Antonia was taken, and for a moment the Jews fled before their enemies in the temple, but the nailed shoes of the foremost assailant slipped upon the marble pavement, his enemies, unable to pierce his coat of mail, severed his limbs from his body, and the Romans were driven back into the fort.

The daily sacrifice now ceased for want of lambs. John, the leader of the zealots, had long since seized the other offerings for his own use. Still the Jews refused to surrender, and the temple, no longer a place of worship, became a vast fortification, and resounded with the sounds of mortal contest. Another unsuccessful attempt was made upon the temple by the Romans, the struggle continuing during many hours.

The ties of affection had for some time been disregarded, but a deed of horror was now perpetrated, the remembrance of which Titus declared he would bury beneath the ruins of the city in which it was committed. A mother, Mary of Bethzab, a woman of rank, took her emaciated infant from her bosom, roasted and ate a part! The zealots were drawn to her house by the scent of food,

but, struck with horror, withdrew when they ascertained the cause. Thus dreadfully was the awful denunciation, Deut. 28. 56, 57, fulfilled.

Titus again attacked the temple, and carried the outer courts. He desired to preserve the main building, but man cannot counteract the will of God, and its destruction had been foretold by our blessed Lord himself. The next day was the 16th of August, the anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews made a furious sally, they were repulsed, and the setting sun once more shone on that magnificent pile, the temple! But it was the last. After nightfall a Roman soldier, contrary to orders, threw a flaming brand into one of the chambers on the north side of the holy place. The flames burst forth, the Roman soldiers, no longer under command, rushed into the sacred building, all speedily was a scene of carnage and plunder, and soon became a smouldering ruin. While the temple was in flames, the infatuation of the Jews continued. Six thousand were led to the roof of a part of the cloisters by an impostor, expecting a miraculous deliverance, and all perished in the flames.

The upper city was still in the hands of the zealots, but they no longer had courage to resist; the strongest parts of the fortifications were abandoned. The Romans entered and found the houses filled with putrid bodies, but still thousands of Jews remained to perish by the sword, and every building, except a few of the towers, was burned.

In this war more than a million and a half of the Jewish nation perished, and the scanty remnant were sold for slaves. So great was the plunder that the price of gold in Syria was reduced to one half its usual value. They fell by the edge of the sword, they were led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem has since been trodden down of the Gentiles.

Thus the Jews remain to this day, a standing memorial of the evil of sin and of the truth of God's word, according to the prophetic declaration of their inspired lawgiver. "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" Deut. 29. 24.

The sufferings of the Jewish nation in this war were indeed unparalleled, but *Josephus* shows that the national guilt

called for such punishment. He says, if the Romans had delayed to come upon these offenders, I think the city would either have been swallowed up by an earthquake, or overwhelmed by a deluge, or have partaken of the fire of Sodom, for it bore a generation much more atheistical than those who suffered thus. In whose frenzy all the people perished together. *Josephus* further relates, "That time became fruitful of all manner of wickedness among the Jews; insomuch that they left no work of mischief unpractised; nor if a person wished to frame a crime in imagination, could he invent any new one. So diseased were they all, both in public and private, and with such ambition did they strive to exceed each other in acts of impiety towards God, and of injustice towards their neighbours; the powerful on the one hand ill-treating the populace, and the multitude on the other eager to destroy the powerful; for the one wished to tyrannize, the other to commit violence, and to plunder the property of the wealthy. To recount all their iniquity would be impossible; but I may briefly say, never did any other city suffer such woes, nor was there a more wicked generation from the beginning of the world."

#### THE GREEK ARTICLE.

Without attempting to enter minutely into the subject of the Greek definitive article, we may observe that attention to it often adds much in force or extent to the common meaning of the words with which it is connected. Thus the title of *The* prophet, given by the Jews to Moses, shows that lawgiver was the greatest of the prophets; which is fully stated, Deut. 34. 10; Numb. 12. 8. Another example may be given from Matt. 26. 28, where our Lord's words, according to the English version, are, For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Rendered literally, with attention to the articles, it is still more emphatic, For this is that blood of mine, that blood of the new covenant, the blood poured out for the multitudes, for the taking away of sins.

*Granville Sharp* pointed out another rule in reference to the Greek definitive article, which is of still greater moment. It often adds much force to personal nouns, by showing that when united by the copulative "and," they both relate to

the same person, though the first alone has the article prefixed. The application of this rule is very important in reference to the doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and is best explained by quoting eight examples given by Granville Sharp. (1.) 2 Cor. 1. 3: This is properly rendered in the English version, agreeably to the preceding rule, The God and Father of our Lord. (2.) 1 Cor. 15. 24, in the same manner is rendered, To God even the Father. Proceeding in reference to this rule, we should have, (3.) Eph. 5. 5, corrected to, In the kingdom of Christ, even of God. (4.) 2 Thess. 1. 12, According to the grace of Jesus Christ, our God and Lord. (5.) 1 Tim. 5. 21, Before Jesus Christ, the God and Lord. (6.) Titus 2. 13, The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (7.) 2 Pet. 1. 1, Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour. (8.) Jude 4, And denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.

These examples from the epistles, are connected with the gospels, as they so decidedly bear testimony to the Divinity of our Lord. *T. H. Horne* well observes, 'That fundamental and most important doctrine of the christian faith, does not depend upon the niceties of grammatical construction, but when these are eagerly seized by those who deny the Divinity of the Son of God, to support their interpretation, we are amply justified in combating them with the same weapons.'

*Middleton* confirmed the above rule and examples by his researches, which afford a most valuable and effectual aid in the just interpretation of Greek writers, both sacred and profane, and show that the writings of the New Testament are penned with perspicuity and correctness. He also shows that some exceptions to the rules, are such in appearance only, and may be accounted for on principles which are just and necessary. Several examples from classic authors, as well as from the ancient fathers, are given by *A. Clarke*.

*Valpy* has prefixed to his edition of the Greek Testament, an analysis or epitome of *Middleton's* work on the Greek article, and shows the importance of this doctrine in determining the sense of passages relating to other subjects besides the Divinity of our Lord. He adduces as an example, the English version of James 2. 14, What doth it profit—though a man

say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Attention to the article which is prefixed to the second word, faith, shows the rendering should be, Can that (or such a) faith save him?

*Middleton* also has shown, that the application of the article is very important, both in the gospels and the epistles, with reference to the Holy Spirit. Its insertion denotes the existence, personality, intelligence, and agency of the Spirit, thus, demonstrating the futility of pretending that the Holy Spirit is merely an influence; but the article is omitted when the effects, results, consequences of the Holy Spirit are denoted; that is, the gifts, Divine influence, energy and power, resulting from the agency of the Holy Spirit. He also has removed difficulties which have been alleged respecting the expression, the Son of God, and shows it is always to be taken in the highest sense of the word, implying the Divinity of Christ, and never in an inferior sense.

In Luke 18. 13, attention to the article makes the application of the passage more forcible; the words of the publican strictly are, Have mercy on me, who am, confessedly, a sinner. By the same rule Matt. 8. 12, is rendered, There shall they weep and gnash their teeth: In other instances it designates a particular object, which though not named in the immediate context, may be supposed to be known to the hearers or readers; thus Matt. 13. 2, The boat or ship; its use in this and other passages denoting a vessel kept for our Saviour's use at that time. In Matt. 9. 28, "The house," points it to be that known house at which our Lord was accustomed to reside, at Capernaum. In John 21. 20, "At the supper," shows that the last supper is referred to. Attention to the article would also show the accuracy of language observed by the evangelists. In Matt. 10. 16, the original is "as sheep," and "as the serpents," all sheep not being supposed to be exposed to wolves, but all serpents being supposed to be cautious.

These few instances may convey a general idea of the nature of this question, respecting which *Valpy* remarks, That this doctrine of the Greek article, as it proves the unaffected accuracy and genuine simplicity of the style of the sacred writers, must tend, should it be but in a secondary degree, to corroborate and strengthen in the most satisfactory manner, the great truth and vital doctrine of

the Divinity of Christ, which is so fully, both directly and indirectly, maintained in the holy scriptures. We have undisputed proofs of the general adherence of the sacred penmen of the New Testament to grammatical usage, and of their observance of the simple forms of language and philology, in the diction which involves no peculiar doctrine; what reason can be assigned why the same application of plain established rules should not be allowed to operate with their usage? acceptance and force, where they tend to substantiate doctrines, the common belief

and conviction of which on the mind of the writer, could alone dictate the adoption of that peculiar and genuine diction?

The reader will now see the importance of reference to this subject, although it cannot be fully entered into in a note. It assures the unlearned reader of the New Testament, that, in addition to the passages where he finds *direct* declarations of the Divinity of Christ, there are very many others in which the same doctrine is expressed as plainly, though in an *indirect* manner, and not always distinctly exhibited in the English version.

### AUTHORS QUOTED IN THIS COMMENTARY.

The paragraphs to which numbers are affixed in the volumes of this Commentary, that contain the Old Testament, are from the authors whose names appear in the first part of the following list. The quotations in the New Testament are from the authors in the second part of the list, and also from some of those in the first. The paragraphs which have not any numbers subjoined, are from Henry and Scott.

In the *notes*, in smaller type, the names of the authors quoted are usually given at length.

1. Biddulph.	18. Dickson.	35. Hales.	52. Owen.
2. Buddicom.	19. Delany.	36. Holden.	53. Outram.
3. Baxter.	20. Durham.	37. Hawker.	54. Poole.
4. Boothroyd.	21. Edwards, J.	38. Hall, R.	55. Paley.
5. Bickersteth.	22. Faber.	39. Hunter.	56. Perkins.
6. Bridges.	23. Fuller, A.	40. Howe.	57. Prideaux.
7. Burder.	24. Fuller, T.	41. Jenour.	58. Reformers.
8. Blunt, H.	25. Fry.	42. Jay.	59. Ryland.
9. Burroughs.	26. Graves.	43. Kennicott.	60. Robinson.
10. Brown, J.	27. Gill.	44. Lowth.	61. Simeon.
11. Clarke, A.	28. Gurnall.	45. Lightfoot.	62. Townsend, G.
12. Clarke, S.	29. Gordon.	46. Lawson.	63. Watson, Bp.
13. Chandler.	30. Greenfield.	47. Morison.	64. Watson, R.
14. Carpenter.	31. Hervey.	48. M'Ewen.	65. Wardlaw.
15. Caryl.	32. Horne, Bp.	49. Mather.	66. Witherspoon.
16. Diodati.	33. Horne, T. H.	50. Newton, Bp.	67. Wall.
17. Dwight.	34. Hall, Bp.	51. Newton, J.	68. Yonge.

69. Henry.	78. Davenant.	86. Keith.	94. m. Magee.
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72. Bishops' Bible.	81. Elsley.	89. Lowman.	96. Slade.
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74. Boys.	82. Guyse.	91. M'Lean.	98. Taylor.
75. Bloomfield.	83. Gillies.	92. Manton.	99. Whitby
76. Baine.	84. Greswell.	93. Mede.	100. Valpy.
77. Campbell.	85. Hawkins.		





